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ABSTRACT

This book offers a set of metaphorical, cognitive tools to assist educators in growing professionally and to hone their teaching and learning skills in their own unique settings. Chapter 1 helps the reader understand the importance that all educators, especially principals as instructional leaders, possess and strategically use an internal compass when making decisions. Chapter 2 deals with the importance of school leaders being reflective and well-read about today's leadership issues, such as understanding accountability and standards for 21st-century school principals, and being up-to-date and aware of a principal's key role in instructional leadership. Chapter 3 is about basic processes and products that guide the daily operation of the school and channel its energy most appropriately toward students and learning. Chapter 4 provides insight into ensuring that a school's culture is positive and centered on teaching and learning. Chapter 5 focuses on communication conduits. Reflective practice, supportive supervision, and cooperative evaluation are main topics of chapter 6. Chapter 7 emphasizes the instructional leadership lens in guiding one's work and decision-making. Chapter 8 covers the tools of accountability. Chapter 9 focuses on proactive leadership for school improvement. Chapter 10 returns focus to the leader as an individual, rounding out the importance of self-understanding. (Contains 177 references.) (RT)

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The Instructional Leadership Toolbox: A Handbook for Improving Practice.

Sandra Lee Gupton

2003

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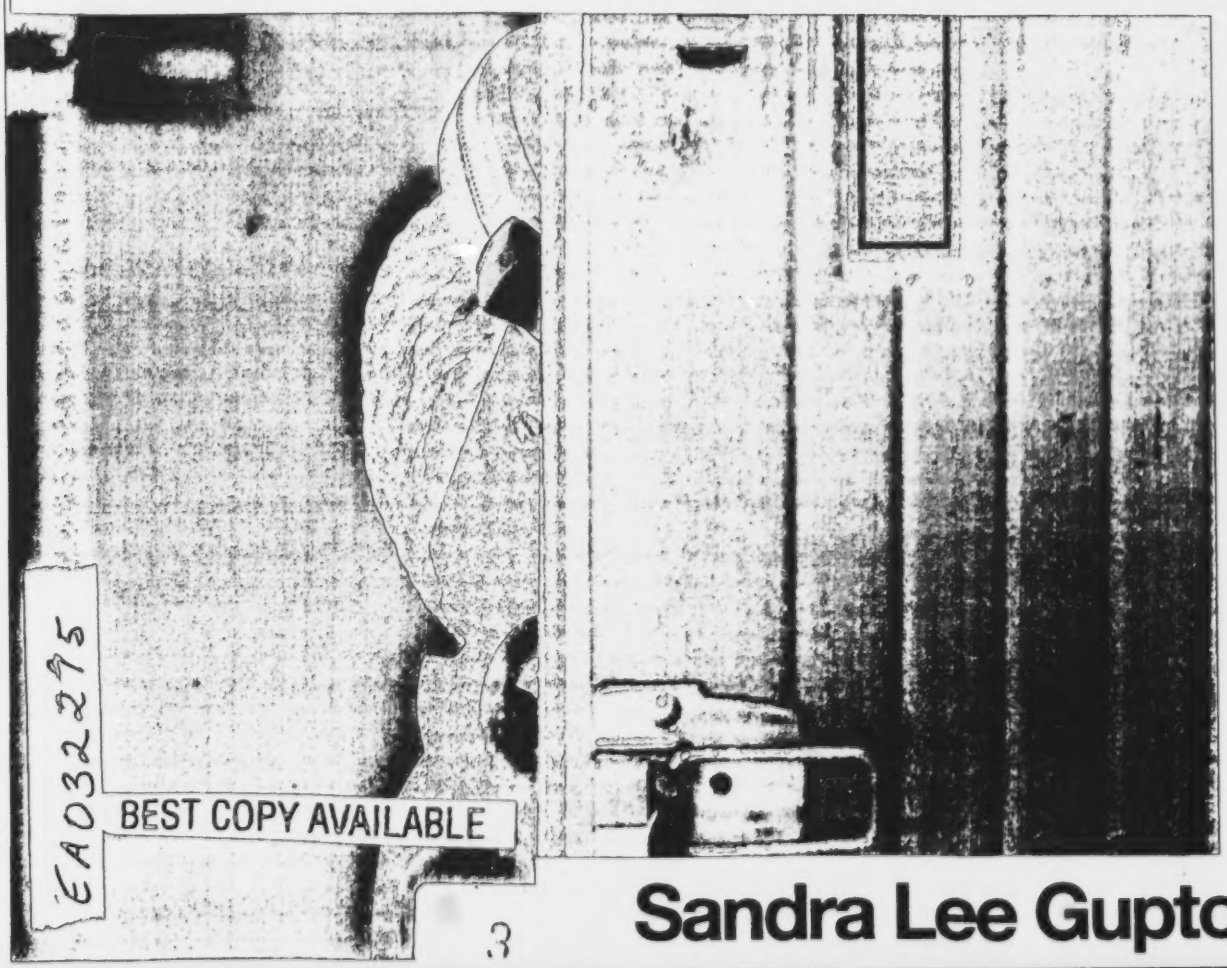

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Preface

In a sense, leadership can be likened to a craft where knowledge, skills, and practices are of little use unless there is a functional purpose to one's work. However, one who aspires to a craft or to lead is at a loss if he/she has a functional purpose but lacks the knowledge, skills, or practices to work toward or to achieve that end.

—Carl D. Glickman (1987).

No role in school leadership's scope of responsibility today looms larger than that of providing instructional oversight and guidance. Principals—as CEOs of schools—are expected to ensure that good instruction and learning are taking place. Although the principal's desk still symbolizes where the buck stops, the principal is by no means the sole source of leadership in most schools today. A more integrated, democratic approach to today's principalship is not merely preferred; it is increasingly essential for dealing well with the nature of today's schools and students. Handling the complex nature of fast-paced change on many fronts and meeting the plurality of student needs demand more participation from stakeholders and the rich resources of varied talent and skill that can only come from team-based leadership. This book deals most specifically with the principal's role in facilitating leadership that integrates multiple sources, including teachers, students, parents, and community members.

Although this toolbox text is written from the perspective that shared leadership is the preferred orientation for today's school leaders in all of a principal's domains of responsibility, it clearly focuses on instructional leadership and the principal's role in

fulfilling best the responsibilities of this vital function. The job of the principal has evolved to one of mobilizer of these many leadership resources. When a principal is skilled in team building and empowering others, leadership can emerge from many of these stakeholder pools. Especially critical to the important function of instructional leadership is the role of teachers as instructional leaders and partners. Though this book is written expressly for principals, much of the information is rooted in the premise that principals and teachers work as partners to provide instructional leadership, with parents and students also involved appropriately in decisions impacting their education. Thus, a primary role for the principal is facilitating such partnerships.

Whether one thinks of school leadership as craft, art, or science, tools are basic to each field. This book offers the principal a compendium of skills, strategies, and information that should enhance (not prescribe) principals' work as craftspersons, artisans, and scientists, especially in the area of instructional leadership. The tools are drawn from the best that research and theory in school administration have to offer today. From this important, but oftentimes abstract and obscure knowledge base, comes my attempt to organize, synthesize, and reframe the strategies into more practical, thought-provoking formats. Although the text is reader friendly with frequent abbreviated lists and bulleted pointers for the principal, it is no monkey-see, monkey-do read. Instead of sure cures and formulas for success, this book offers a set of metaphorical, cognitive tools, which in the hands of reflective educators can assist them to grow professionally and hone their skills to facilitate better teaching and learning in their own unique settings.

TOOLS AS METAPHORS

The tool metaphor is used throughout this text, with each of the 10 chapters presented as a tool having particular potential for helping school principals improve their leadership skill and thus the school's capacity to help children learn.

Chapter 1 sets the stage for the entire text by helping the reader understand the importance of all educators—and most certainly principals as instructional leaders—to possess and strategically use an internal compass when making decisions,

solving problems, and answering difficult professional questions in light of what's best for students and their learning. Glickman (1987) reminds us, "While research and experience help us see the connections between actions and outcomes, they cannot select our goals for us. In this regard, values and beliefs become central" (p. 342). School leaders' introspection and examination of their beliefs and values and their assessment and awareness of their professional strengths and weaknesses are the tools offered in this chapter as essential enablers for principals' providing instructional guidance at its best.

Chapter 2 deals with the nuts and bolts of school leadership, which include the importance of school leaders being reflective and well-read about today's leadership issues; understanding accountability and standards for 21st-century school principals; and being up-to-date and aware of a principal's key role in instructional leadership. These nuts-and-bolts understandings are fundamental tools of a school leader, regardless of the context or the leadership style.

Chapter 3 is about basic processes and products, the blueprints that guide the daily operation of the school and channel its energy most appropriately toward students and learning. The stakeholder-shared processes involved in creating a school's mission, vision, goals and objectives, and strategies (i.e., the blueprint documents) are as important as the products themselves. Only if the documents are living—that is, only if they truly guide the day-to-day operation of the stakeholders in the school—are they worthwhile. Thus, stakeholders must believe in these blueprints and share in their development if they are to be most passionate and enthusiastic about their roles in implementing them. The organization's blueprints are the processes and products essential to channeling the direction and energy of the various constituencies in schools, often characterized as loosely coupled organizations, inclined not to be well-centered or purposefully unified.

Chapter 4 is the superglue of a leader's toolbox. It provides insight into ensuring that the school's culture is positive and centered on teaching and learning. The importance of and how to assess school climate and culture, the behaviors and skills most essential for creating and maintaining a positive school culture, and the importance of moving a school from a collection of classrooms and cubby holes, parents, and community

members to school as a learning community are included in this chapter.

Chapter 5 adds the vital tool, communication conduits, to the principal's toolbox. Strategies for improving the school's communication include the importance of listening and understanding, facilitating dialogue and collaboration among the various school stakeholders, and connecting the school and educators with parents and community members as true partners in the village's shared enterprise of educating its young people.

Chapter 6 offers the leader a humble metaphor for powerful tools—whetstones for ensuring best practices from professional educators in the form of reflective practice, supportive supervision, and cooperative evaluation. These practices are key to professional educators' and schools' continued improvement. As healthy and sane as they may seem, these approaches to very fundamental leadership functions require a major shift in thinking about the roles and responsibilities of today's teacher and principal.

Chapter 7's tool, the instructional leadership lens, is to the principal what safety goggles are to the carpenter. They protect the leader from having his or her vision blurred or damaged by political and other extraneous debris. Using the research-based, learner-centered principles as the reliable lens for making decisions and guiding one's work facilitates leaders by keeping them focused (and free from the barrage of distracters) on clear-headed, student-centered thinking.

Chapter 8 contains the tools of accountability—tape measures, plumb lines, and common sense. For the principal, these tools are thoroughly understanding accountability issues, appropriately using well-designed standards to facilitate school improvement, and focusing on the classroom as the centerpiece for finding out just how well students are performing.

Chapter 9 adds the muscle tool to the leader's toolbox, the power saw of cutting-edge strategies, which include the important concept of proactive leadership, wherein school leaders make change work for, rather than impede, school improvement; the various processes for dealing responsibly and most productively with data to improve teaching and learning; and the power of technology to transform schools with large populations of students who are at risk of failing into learning communities where all adults and children are most likely to succeed.

Chapter 10 brings us full circle to focusing once again, as we did in the beginning chapters, on the leader as an individual, rounding out the points in Chapters 1 and 2, which deal with the importance of a principal's self-understanding and thorough examination of his or her beliefs and values, awareness of the standards and professional requirements of today's school leaders, and analysis of his or her strengths and weaknesses in light of those expectations. This chapter brings closure to the text by emphasizing the significance of attending to personal fitness, the undeniably ultimate tool for peak performance: physical stamina, intellectual prowess, social and emotional stability, and spiritual bounty. Sustained neglect in any of these facets of our humanity eventually leads to deficits that take their toll on other dimensions of our lives. Overemphasis on one area does not compensate for deficits in another. Balance is the key. Personal and professional lives are not lived separately; each impacts the other, for better or for worse. Achieving balance across all areas of our lives is challenging, but the better we manage this, the more wholesomely productive we become at work and at home.

This handbook for principals has much flexibility for individuals to put their own spin on leadership. Oversimplification of the complex work of leadership by reducing the content to recipes or formulas for success is avoided. Instead, readers are encouraged throughout the book to reflect on various sets of questions that can help a principal find direction most fitting to the situation and the school context. The text's tools are cognitive and work best for the reader who is reflective and sensitive to how the tools can best facilitate school improvement in one's particular situation. Good tools in the hands of a thoughtful, dedicated craftsperson are merely facilitators of the person's drive and passion to improve and to excel at leadership. My hope is that this book finds its way to those educators who have the stamina, ambition, intelligence, and disposition to want the best for our schools and our children and that it helps them in finding their own way and achieving their dreams and mine for all students to grow up healthy, happy, and well educated. America's greatest achievement yet would be our ability to ensure that no child is left behind. My very best wishes to you in our mutual pursuit of making our schools and world a better place by investing our best in children.

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This book is, of course, like most books really are—the result of one's entire life and experiences with others, many of whom played pivotal roles in its creation. My wonderful mother, Eleanor; my daughter Ginger, with her unshakable love and optimism; my daughter Stacy, who herself is now a capable educator; and my loving sister and best friend Rebecca were—as they always are—constant sources of support and encouragement throughout the process of the book's development.

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Sandra's professional interests are centered on leadership issues related to gender equity, program reform, and school improvement. Her research on gender equity in educational leadership has resulted in the publication of numerous articles and conference presentations across the U.S. and a book, *Highly Successful Women Administrators: The Inside Stories of How They Got There* (co-authored with Gloria A. Slick), offering advice to prospective women administrators in education.

Her most significant work in recent years has been focused on the reform of USM's program preparing school administrators, a process that has given her the valuable experience of providing

leadership in the complete redesign of the department master level degree program for school leaders. This program, now in its fourth year of operation, has received national acclaim as one of the top-rated programs in the country for preparing principals.

To Ginger, Stacy, and Gerald
for their love, support, and encouragement.

CHAPTER ONE

A School Leader's Compass

In Whose Interest?

Education is a deeply moral enterprise. How can the administration of such an enterprise be any the less moral?

—Christopher Hodgkinson (1991, p. 140).

Effective leaders continually ask questions, probing all levels of the organization for information, testing their own perceptions, and rechecking the facts.

—Warren Bennis and
Joan Goldsmith (1997, p. 3).

- ❑ Introspection: Examining Core Beliefs and Values
- ❑ Personal Skills Assessment
- ❑ Professional Skills Assessment

Navigating successfully in the turbulent seas of today's school leadership requires that principals have a compass, an inner strength, derived from having examined carefully who they are, what they believe and value, and why they are in the business of education. Such self-assessment and reflection enable leaders to understand and thus manage better their emotions and the intense stress so often related to educational leadership positions. This chapter facilitates school leader's' examinations of themselves, so they can acquire a fundamental leadership tool: a compass that helps them maintain a level head and a moral purpose in doing what's best for students and student learning as they undertake the responsible position of school principal and their important role in instructional leadership.

INTROSPECTION: EXAMINING CORE BELIEFS AND VALUES

A life lived well is earmarked by harmony between what a person holds dear and how one is able to practice those beliefs and values day in and day out. Outstanding leaders come in all shapes and sizes, from all parts of the world, from across all of time, and may stand for good or evil causes, but all are clearly alike in at least one distinguishing trait: Their values and beliefs are so well-defined and articulated, their sense of purpose so strong, that their values and resulting purposes become their passions. They feel so passionately about their beliefs and mission that they are willing to take great risks and perform with much courage to further them.

Underpinning all facets of an effective principal's many functions—even those that may not be so risky or require great courage—is what the principal believes in and values. If principals are to be more than managers, they must have at the center of their work and being a set of core values that propel their work into the ranks of real leadership. Although managing may be

interpreted as objectively performing one's duties, leading requires more. There is no value-free leadership; the term is an oxymoron because at the heart of leadership and its close companion—good decision making—are the values and beliefs that form the framework for guiding behaviors and action. Without a well-defined core of beliefs and values, there can be no true leadership. According to Christopher Hodgkinson (1991),

> The educational leader as practical idealist [acts] . . . according to personal ideals, to prevent the bad from being born and the good from dying too soon. The leader is not tossed upon the seas by every wave of political opinion, but feels the honor, and the obligations that go with that honor, to participate in an intensely moral vocation. (p. 165)

The education profession has increasingly focused attention in the past couple of decades on issues related to such moral and ethical leadership. The numerous sets of standards for today's school leaders more often than not include a dimension pertaining to moral or ethical expectations. The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1993) includes an ethical, morals strand in its recommendations for educational administrator preparation curricula. Among the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium's (1996) six standards, the fifth standard pertains to moral, ethical leadership. It reads: "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner" (p. 5). Furthermore, a number of educational researchers and writers have attempted to describe what constitutes the moral imperatives of leadership that they espouse.

Michael Fullan (1997), for example, offers "practicing fearlessness"—albeit selectively, to be sure—as 1 of 10 guiding principles for school leaders. "Effective principal[s]," he asserts, "are men and women who take independent stances on matters of importance and in most cases, are all the more respected for it" (p. 31). Fullan goes on to explain that fearlessness does not always have to be practiced on a dramatic scale, with high stakes involved. One of his examples relates well to what a principal could do to "practice fearlessness" in the role of instructional leader:

> One need not start by publicly defying the superintendent! Three criteria for beginning might be to be selective, to do it on a small scale and to make a positive rather than a negative act of courage. So, for example, one might make it clear that the latest curriculum directive cannot be immediately addressed because the staff are in the midst of implementing another important priority. Then, the principal can demonstrate willingness to discuss the importance and progress of this other priority. (p. 31)

Another of Fullan's (1997) guiding principles is for principals to "decide what you are *not* going to do" (p. 37). Fullan describes the hectic nature of a principal's routine day and makes a case for the absolute necessity of a principal to set priorities and not be swept up in the momentum of a school's constant stream of interruptions:

> The principal, in effect, [says] to the superintendent that instructional leadership is his or her number one priority. . . The basic message is that if there is a meeting which conflicts, he or she cannot attend the meeting but will send someone else. This is not a matter of being stubborn. . . . Without such protection, a principal's time would get totally eaten up by unconnected activities which amount to nothing. (p. 37)

In both of these principles set forth by Fullan, the principal's knowing his or her beliefs and standing up for them is key.

From extensive studies related to the principalship, William Greenfield (1985) concludes that a true leader "believe[s] in the worth of what [he or she] seeks to accomplish and exhibit[s] in . . . daily action a commitment to the realization of those goals and purposes" (p. 17). Similarly, Thomas Sergiovanni (1991), researcher and eloquent advocate of "moral leadership" contends that a "good principal needs to have some sense of what she or he values, something to be committed to, a compass to help navigate the way—a personal vision" (p. 334). Without such commitment and vision, researcher and contemporary author Roland Barth (1990) suggests that "our behavior becomes reflexive, inconsistent, and shortsighted as we seek the action that will most quickly put out the fire so we can get on with putting out the next one"

(p. 211). And finally, yet another example of the current focus on values, commitments, beliefs and how good leaders demonstrate such moral strength comes from Schwahn and Spady (1998), who claim that "total leaders reflect deeply on their values and principles, are open to their organization and the public about them, and consistently model them" (p. 73). In their 15 performance roles of a total leader, two directly relate to the leader's personal integrity that is derived from having and demonstrating a clear set of core values and beliefs: (1) creating and sustaining a compelling personal and organizational purpose and (2) modeling core organizational values and personal principles.

It is essential for principals to have reflected deeply on their value system, particularly as it relates to their role as school leader, and to have written their strongest beliefs and values on key aspects of schools. Stephen Covey (1991) suggests that all good planning begins by identifying what one believes in and values most dearly. Certainly, identifying one's core beliefs and values, particularly about teaching, learning, and schools, is a fundamental tool for enabling the leadership potential of a principal. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1983) propose that educators develop an educational platform that they describe as "the assumptions or beliefs that deal with the way children and youth grow, with the purposes of schooling, with the nature of learning, with pedagogy and teaching, with educational programs, and with school climate" (p. 27).

Developing an educational platform is not easy. Even veteran educators sometimes find it difficult to describe succinctly what they believe about these important dimensions of school. Developing your own educational platform will require a great deal of reflection and introspection. It may require some reading as you stumble about for responses that make sense to you as you actually see them on paper. But it's a tool you must have to be your best as an educator, and one without which you will surely not succeed as a school leader and principal. If you have not engaged in deliberate reflection about and articulation of such a platform, the questions in Box 1.1, based on the work of Sergiovanni and Starratt (1983), should be helpful in developing this fundamental piece so critical to effective leadership in general, but even more critical to effective instructional leadership.

Box 1.1

MY EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PLATFORM

1. What are the aims of education?
2. What should the major achievements of students be?
3. What is the social significance of student learning?
4. What is my image of the learner?
5. What is the value of the curriculum?
6. What is my image of an effective teacher?
7. What kind of pedagogy do I favor?
8. What should be the primary language of discourse used in learning situations?
9. What is my preferred kind of teacher–student relationships?
10. What kind of school climate is best for learning?
11. What is my image of school leadership?
12. What is the principal's role in school leadership?
13. How do I fit into this leadership image?

PERSONAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT

A major part of understanding oneself is identifying "what makes you tick" and identifying your strengths and weaknesses—personal and professional. Reflecting on and articulating an educational platform as proposed in this chapter are major steps toward self-appraisal and understanding. Done well, such a platform provides the grounding essential for evaluating and making tough decisions and taking action. "Without such a reference point," admonish Razik and Swanson (2001), "the administrator drifts like a rudderless ship on a stormy sea" (p. 351).

A host of inventories and instruments are available to help individuals first understand themselves better as people. The more keen an individual's awareness of his or her likes and dislikes, personality makeup, aptitudes, and character traits, the better the person's ability to apply that knowledge objectively and thus effectively in the workplace. Gathering data about oneself is often the first step recommended in any career planning. Yet many experienced, practicing principals have done very little to explore their own proclivities. It's never too late, however, to make a conscious effort to learn more about oneself. In fact, it's a lifelong pursuit because as we continue to learn and grow, we change. Remaining cognizant of how we change as individuals is essential to continuing to be our best as professional educators and leaders.

Many instruments are available to help you assess your strengths and weaknesses as a principal. They vary widely in administration, costs, and content, however. Do your homework and critique several instruments to find the one that best meets your needs and purposes. The instruments discussed in this text are a mere sampling, intended only to give the reader an idea of what is available. The usefulness of any one of the instruments rests on the reader's particular needs and circumstances. Among the most well-known (not endorsed here as the best, however) of the self-assessment instruments on the market is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which classifies an individual's personality type based on the work of psychologist Carl Jung. Jung's theory of personality types deals with dimensions of introversion-extroversion, sensing-intuiting, thinking-feeling, and judging-perceiving. Sixteen personality types emerge from interactions between the preferences.

The FIRO Awareness Scale (FIRO-B) is another widely used instrument that measures an individual's characteristic behavior toward other people along the dimensions of inclusion, control, and affection (openness). The Rorschach test, the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), and the Sentence Completion Test are other personality tests that are useful in assessing personal characteristics and traits. The Gregorc Style Delineator is an instrument designed to provide insight into how a person receives and expresses information. Four personality types are reported: (1) concrete sequential, (2) abstract sequential, (3) abstract random, and (4) concrete random.

The instruments sampled should give you an idea of the wide variability of available instruments, what they help to assess, and the ways in which they can be used. The object is not to find the perfect instrument but to be aware of the wide variability and availability of these tools to assist you in learning more about yourself and how others view you as a person.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT

In addition to self-analysis of personality, personality traits, and personal skills, further analysis of your leadership style, skills, and behavior can add significantly to self-understanding and how others may perceive you. Although a number of instruments are designed to help with leadership analysis, their reliability and authenticity for today's school leaders are highly suspect. Many of the instruments used to measure leadership rely heavily on constructs and models of leadership from more than 30 years ago. The characteristics and behaviors of more recently recognized leadership styles labeled as transformative and integrative are fundamental to reflect the models of leadership needed in today's schools. Another problem with many of the leadership measurement tools is the exclusion of minority and female subjects in their norming processes. With the current literature that widely substantiates and acknowledges gender-as-a-class differences that exist in leadership styles, it is inexcusable to continue to measure leadership with instruments that have not been validated by a representative norming population that includes minorities and women.

The Leader Behavior Questionnaire (LBQ; Revised, 1988-1996) is constructed to measure "organizational leadership" and yields scores in the following categories: visionary leadership behavior, visionary leadership characteristics, and visionary culture building. Not to be confused with the much older Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (1957-1963), the LBQ is considerably more appropriate for use today, with language and content that reflect more evolved models of leadership.

The Leadership Competency Inventory (1993-1996) is a recently developed instrument that purports to measure an individual's use of four competencies related to leadership:

information seeking, conceptual thinking, strategic orientation, and service orientation.

The School Principal Job Functions Inventory (SP-JFI) is an instrument of considerable complexity designed to assess the relative importance of 17 functions performed in a particular type of principalship as well as the principal's ability to perform the functions. Its intent is to clarify a school principal's job responsibilities and to diagnose individual and group training needs.

These instruments are recommended as useful for principals to assess themselves, but they certainly are not the only instruments. Many other such instruments are available and continue to be updated and improved. Different instruments are useful for different purposes. It would be helpful for the administrator to keep abreast of what is available and what might be helpful, depending on one's special needs and the situation. More information on where to locate these instruments can be found at the end of this chapter.

In addition to these and many other such published instruments designed to measure leadership, practically all of the major professional organizations have developed their individual versions of the skills and proficiencies most needed by today's school leader. Researchers' lists of preferred skills add to the sheer mass of literature purporting what skills, behaviors, knowledge, and dispositions principals need to provide sufficient leadership. Only recently have the various organizations and groups attempted to come together to develop a set of guidelines regarding what skills are most required of today's school principal. The Interstate Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), operating under the auspices of the Council of Chief State School Officers, is one such collective. "Recognizing the need for a universal set of guiding standards for school leaders" is a fundamental incentive for the work of this group (1996, p. 7). In the introduction to their set of standards, this group states, "We found a major void in the area of educational administration—a set of common standards remains conspicuous by its absence" (1996, p. 7). Because of this group's current national impact on principal licensure—that is, several states have contracted with the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to develop a licensure assessment based on the ISLLC standards, which they now use as the required principal's licensure examination—their set of standards and supportive indicators should be a

good place to turn to begin to assess one's areas of strengths and weaknesses as a school principal. For certain, school principals should be familiar with these nationally endorsed standards. Each of the six ISLLC standards (cited in Chapter 2 of this book) is supported by indicators grouped into three proficiency categories: (1) what an administrator should know, (2) what dispositions (beliefs, values, commitments) an administrator should have, and (3) what an administrator should do to facilitate the standard. The complete version of these standards is quite lengthy and readily accessible from the Council of Chief State School Officers' Web site (www.ccsso.org).

Another excellent resource to assist a principal in the self-assessment process is Daresh's handbook for principals, titled *Beginning the Principalship: A Practical Guide for New School Leaders.* Chapter 3 of the handbook offers a personal leadership checkup complete with summaries of several credible lists of principal proficiencies. The authors conclude that the list of leadership skills developed by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) is a user-friendly tool for self-assessing one's leadership strengths and those areas in need of improvement or refinement.

In its 1991 edition of *Proficiencies for Principals,* NAESP clusters its skills into three major categories: leadership, supervisory, and administrative/management proficiencies. The sampling of NAESP's leadership and supervisory categories of proficiencies shown in Box 1.2 are specific and practical enough for principals to use most easily in assessing their strengths and weaknesses—unlike some of the other sets of standards. These two categories are especially related to functions of instructional leadership. In assessing one's instructional leadership skill and potential, it would be useful for the principal to perform a self-assessment using NAESP's standard-setting skills by rating himself or herself with a low-, moderate-, or high-functioning score on each skill. The principal then should ask respected colleagues, faculty members, or both who are familiar with the principal's performance to also assess the principal. The various perspectives could be compared to see how the principal and his or her colleagues perceive the principal's leadership skills. The NAESP also suggests that in addition to rating one's level of proficiency for each skill, survey respondents should rate how important they feel each skill

(Text continues on page 15)

Box 1.2

EXAMPLES OF NAESP'S LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISORY CATEGORIES OF PROFICIENCIES

In each of the following two categories of proficiencies (leadership and supervision) using a 1–5, low-to-high rating scale), how does your self-rating compare with that others? *Oh, to see ourselves as "ithers" see us!*

LEADERSHIP PROFICIENCIES

1. Leadership Behavior

The principal must:

1.01 Exercise vision and provide leadership that appropriately involves staff, parents, students, and the community in the identification and accomplishment of the school's mission.

1.02 Recognize the individual needs of all staff and students, including those who are at risk because of diverse cultures, backgrounds, and abilities.

1.03 Apply effective human relations skills.

1.04 Encourage and develop the leadership of others.

1.05 Analyze relevant information, make decisions, delegate responsibility, and provide appropriate support and follow-up.

1.06 Identify and creatively coordinate the use of available human, material, and financial resources to achieve the school's mission and goals.

1.07 Explore, assess, develop, and implement educational concepts that enhance teaching and learning.

1.08 Bond the school community through shared values and beliefs.

1.09 Initiate and manage constructive change.

1.10 Participate actively as a member of local, state, and national professional groups.

2. Communication Skills

The principal must:

2.01 Articulate beliefs persuasively, effectively defend decisions, explain innovation, and behave in ways that are congruent with these beliefs and decisions.

2.02 Write clearly and concisely so that the message is understood by the intended audience.

2.03 Utilize basic facts and data, and recognize values when communicating priorities.

2.04 Demonstrate skills in nonverbal communication, including personal impact, to communicate a positive image of the school.

2.05 Use current technologies to communicate the school's philosophy, mission, needs, and accomplishments.

2.06 Make effective use of the mass media.

2.07 Use active listening skills.

2.08 Express disagreement without being disagreeable.

2.09 Promote student and staff use of higher-level thinking skills.

2.10 Exemplify the behavior expected of others.

2.11 Keep communication flowing to and from the school.

2.12 Communicate effectively with the various constituencies within the school community.

3. Group Processes

The principal must:

3.01 Apply the principles of group dynamics and facilitation skills.

3.02 Involve staff, parents, students, and the community in setting goals.

3.03 Resolve difficult situations by use of conflict-resolution methods.

3.04 Match the appropriate decision-making techniques to the particular situation.

3.05 Identify—in collaboration with staff, parents, and students—the decision-making procedures the school will follow.

3.06 Apply the process of consensus-building both as a leader and as a member of a group.

3.07 Achieve intended outcomes through the use of principles of motivation.

SUPERVISORY PROFICIENCIES

5. Instruction

The principal must:

5.01 Apply the principles of child growth and development, from the prekindergarten through early adolescence levels, particularly as they relate to the children's linguistic, physical, social, emotional, and cognitive needs.

5.02 Regularly assess the teaching methods and strategies being used and ensure that they are appropriate, varied, and effective.

5.03 Apply principles of teaching and learning for both children and adults.

6. Performance

The principal must:

6.01 Set high expectations for students, staff, parents, and self.

6.02 Help teachers understand and apply teaching styles that complement the varied learning styles of students.

6.03 Implement principles of behavior management.

6.04 Encourage students and staff alike to set high personal goals and offer encouragement and support in the achievement of those goals.

6.05 Involve others in designing staff development programs that match the goals of the school with the needs of participants.

6.06 Encourage staff participation in professional development activities.

6.07 Identify and employ appropriate support services.

6.08 Engage in continuing personal and professional development.

7. Evaluation

The principal must:

7.01 Use a variety of techniques and strategies to assess:
- Student performance
- Individual staff and personal performance
- Progress toward achievement of curriculum goals
- Effectiveness of the overall instructional program

7.02 Seek and encourage input from a variety of sources to improve the school's program.

7.03 Foster constructive suggestions from students, staff, parents, and the community for improving the school's program.

7.04 Apply effective observation and conferencing skills.

7.05 Inspire teachers at all levels of skill and experience to acquire new competencies and experiences.

7.06 Utilize both formative and summative evaluation procedures.

7.07 Demonstrate a level of human relations skills which assures that the evaluation process will be helpful rather than destructive.

7.08 Develop professional growth plans to improve teaching and administrative performance.

Selected portions from the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1991).

is to the principal and the principal's situation. From such analysis, a growth plan could then be developed to address those areas needing the most improvement.

Keeping abreast of the ever-changing standards for leaders developed by the profession and seeking honestly to assess oneself with these standards is one way to stay tuned in and sensitive to the areas needed for professional growth as a leader. Of course, the real usefulness of such assessment and analysis depends on what is done with it. Once areas of strength and those skills in greatest need of improvement are identified, it is important to develop a plan of action with goals, specific strategies, and a timeline for accomplishing them. Professional development should be an ongoing part of every educator's professional life—the entire professional life. Outstanding educational leaders are exemplary lifelong learners who continue to grow and hone their professional skills as long as they remain active in the profession. Such leadership will occur only with deliberate attention to and reflection about job performance and professional disposition. The time spent in self-assessment and reflection pays off in rich dividends in the long run by increasing skill level and heightening a

sense of enthusiasm and energy so essential to the work of good leadership.

Further assessment of one's leadership skills—improved understanding and clarification of strengths and weaknesses—can facilitate a principal's ability to function well in the position and to continue to grow and develop as a leader. The process, of course, is never complete; what better model is there for teachers, parents, and students than principals who themselves demonstrate the power and benefits of lifelong learning, remain open to new ideas, and continually seek feedback and improvement? Writing on the importance of leaders' moral foundations, Schwahn and Spady (1998) assert, "Quality leaders openly endorse, consistently model, and clearly exemplify the core values of excellence and productivity and the professional principles of accountability and improvement. Together, these four moral elements define and shape their commitment to continuous improvement—of themselves, their employees, and their organization's processes and products" (p. 91). School leaders could benefit from asking "In whose interest?" which acts as a compass to guide their daily work in schools. If decisions are not made and action is not clearly taken in the best interest of students and their learning, how can it be justified? *Nuff* said!

SAMPLING OF ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

Leader Behavior Questionnaire (LBQ), Revised (1988-1996). Authored by Marshall Sashkin. Published by Human Resource Development Press. Can be used by the principal to self-assess or to get feedback from faculty on leadership skills.

Leadership Competency Inventory. Authored by Stephen P. Kelner. Published by Hay/McBer. Can be used to self-assess or to get feedback from faculty on leadership skills.

The FIRO Awareness Scale (1957-1996). Authored by Will Schutz and Marilyn Wood. Published by Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. Can be used to evaluate interpersonal relations by the individual or as feedback from a group.

Gregorc Style Delineator (1982-1998). Authored by Anthony F. Gregorc. Published by Gregorc Associates, Inc. Can be used by the individual as a means of self-assessment or to enable a group to understand each other and their varied approaches as individuals to dealing with information.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M (MBTI, 1943-1998). Authored by Katharine Briggs, Isabel Briggs Myers, Mary McCaulley, Naomi Quenk, and Allen Hammer. Published by Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. Can be used for self-assessment by an individual for understanding her own personality type or with a group to enable the group to understand each other's varied personalities.

School Principal Job Functions Inventory (SP-JFI). Authored by Melany Baehr, Frances M. Burns, R. Bruce McPherson, and Columbus Salley. Published by London House, Inc. Can be used by the principal and/or faculty to rate the leader's ability to perform various functions. Different forms are available for individual self-assessment and group assessment.

POINTERS FOR THE PRINCIPAL

→ Develop your educational leadership platform.

- ➢ Clarify in writing your most basic beliefs about students, teaching, learning, and leading.
- ➢ Differentiate between your core beliefs and values and those open to change.
- ➢ Look for inconsistencies in your actions and your stated beliefs.
- ➢ Try daily to behave in concert with your beliefs about what's in the best interest of students.

→ Know thyself.

- ➢ Take routine, objective stock of yourself—personal characteristics, biases, personality.
- ➢ Find out how others perceive you (the good, the bad, and the ugly)!
- ➢ Act on the results to make a personal plan to improve.
- ➢ Always consider yourself a "work in progress."

→ Know thyself as a leader too.

- ➢ Take stock of your leadership skills.
- ➢ Do self-assessments and gather anonymous input from relevant others (i.e., supervisors, faculty, students, staff, parents).
- ➢ Be objective and open to the feedback, and then act on it to become a better principal.

CHAPTER TWO

The Nuts and Bolts of School Leadership

The future of American education can be no brighter than the future of the . . . school principalship.

—National Association of Elementary School Principals (1990, p. 45).

- Leadership for Today's Schools
- Accountability and the Principalship
- Standards for Today's School Leaders
- Defining Instructional Leadership

As basic as nuts and bolts are to the handyperson's toolbox is the principal's understanding of the literature base related to organizations and leadership skills needed to be an effective leader. Too often the importance of studying and understanding relevant research and theory is dismissed by the school practitioner as being too "ivory tower" and unrelated to the real world, the day-to-day operation of schools. Indeed, the national push for accountable programs preparing school leaders has set in motion over the last decade a trend toward mandatory internships and strong problem-based curricula to address what is perceived as a lack of relevancy in the preparation of principals.

Although scant research exists to support any one form of administrator preparation, the need for more practical applications of this knowledge and theory base as part of integrated administrator-preparation programs has been widely accepted and supported by numerous nationally recognized leaders, accreditation councils, and professional organizations in the field (e.g., National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education, American Association of School Administrators, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, and Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium). This widespread acceptance and endorsement of such hands-on, field-based preparation experiences may now have tilted the theory-versus-practice scales so far to the right that leadership preparation programs' treatment of the extant literature and theory base may be in jeopardy. Jacques (1989) warns:

> If you dislike theory and seek only "practical action," that is unfortunate. . . . Anything you do is founded upon a theory of some sort, and eschewing theory merely means that your decisions are being misdirected by some bad theory which you do not know about. (p. 3)

The more an administrator reads and reflects upon the research and theory base in the profession, the more likely the leader is able to draw from that well of understanding to make sound decisions, rather than react in knee-jerk fashion. Daresh and Playko (1995) assert the following:

> When our perspectives are rooted in theory, we also have access to a way of guiding our behaviors in everyday

> problems and situations. As a consequence, our actions will be based on something other than the same tired answers to the same tired questions. (p. 71)

Being professionally well-read and keeping abreast of the growing knowledge base on effective leadership, embracing the concept of accountability as a responsible professional person and as a fundamental part of the school's everyday operation, being aware of and using national standards for the school and for yourself as a means of self-evaluation and professional development, and understanding the critical role of instructional leadership as a distinctive, unique part of the school leadership umbrella are the nuts and bolts of the contemporary principal's trade and the tools with which you hone professional skill and increase your understanding of the complexities of good leadership. This chapter deals briefly with each of these four basic areas of concern, which today's principals must know and understand to maximize their leadership potential in the position.

LEADERSHIP FOR TODAY'S SCHOOLS: WHAT THE LITERATURE SAYS

Without question, the role of the principal has evolved into a very different job from the principalship most often associated with the early and mid-1900s. Although different, the role of today's principal is deemed no less important—and in fact may be even more essential than ever—in achieving top-performing schools. Research on schools in which students' academic achievement is not consistently predicted by their parents' income levels or their ethnic origins often indicate the vital role of the principal in the success of the school. Kent Peterson's (1999) review of research on what effective principals do to help students achieve success is typical of most other related research syntheses. Representative of the research results on behaviors of effective principals is Peterson's condensed summary of effective principal behaviors:

1. Principals provide instructional leadership and nurture it in others.
2. Principals shape the school culture and climate.

3. Principals manage and administer complex organizational processes.
4. Principals build and maintain positive relations with parents and community.
5. Principals lead and support school improvement and change.

Examination of today's effective principal reveals that the most critical role shift is from a managerial orientation to a leadership orientation. Although sound management is part of effective leadership, its role is clearly only one dimension of today's principalship, which optimally necessitates expertise in a variety of school-related operations other than management, as Peterson's summary of five dimensions illustrates.

The distinction between a manager and a leader is often made in the more recent research related to school leadership. "A manager does the thing right," offer Bennis and Nanus (1985) in their book on leaders, but "a leader does the right thing" (p. 4). Research has identified two primary dimensions operating simultaneously in organizations: organizational concerns and people concerns. Managers are more typically concerned with the organization's tasks. However, understanding and motivating workers in an organization to achieve its mission is more often ascribed to the role of leaders. Administrators must concern themselves with both dimensions to be effective and to facilitate the mission and goals of the organization. Today's principal must embrace both organizational and human concerns to maximize the school's effectiveness. In their 1990 report titled *Principals for Our Changing Schools*, the National Commission for the Principalship described the contemporary principal's dual role of managing and leading:

> Principals provide leadership to schools along two dimensions. Exercising broad leadership, they influence school cultures by building a vision, stimulating innovation, and encouraging performance. Principals also exercise initiative in a more technical sense by the daily practice of functional leadership. They "make things happen" and ensure that the organization's tasks are accomplished. (p. 21)

Understanding all one possibly can about these two complex dimensions of leadership—organizations and people, managing and leading—is at the heart of a school principal's work. To diminish the importance of or to ignore the research and increasingly enlightening literature on these topics is to seal a principal's mediocrity or worse—one's doom.

There is no shortage of literature on leadership and the evolution of the school principal's primary function from one of managing to one of leading (Blase & Blase, 1998; Lieberman, 1995; Schlechty, 1990). In their 1990 report, the National Commission for the Principalship states:

> As demands grow upon schools for improved quality and broader services, a new principalship emerges. . . . No longer a manager of routines, principals need increasingly to take initiatives. . . . All this requires more knowledge. It requires leadership. Not ordinary leadership but astute leadership. (p. 11)

Another major shift that emerges in the literature is the emphasis on principals' facilitation of more democratic processes that engage relevant people in the leadership process throughout the school; this facilitation creates a learning, collaborative community rather than a unilateral, autocratic environment complete with top-down authoritarian commands of the principal. According to the National Commission for the Principalship (1990), true leadership is exercised when "leaders nurture in their constituents a capacity to engage in the leadership task. Since autocracy undermines initiative, building this capacity requires leaders who consult and listen and who respect and develop the human potentiality" (p. 13). However, such democratic processes at the school level require systemic support systems to be successful. Community expectations and district-level leadership can either facilitate or impede this democratic, participatory approach to the principalship. Although this movement is prevalent in the literature, its widespread application in today's schools remains disputable for a number of reasons—some of which are beyond the control of the principal.

Leadership has been studied and conceptualized from numerous perspectives, including personality, traits, skills, behaviors,

and styles. Lunenberg and Ornstein's textbook (2000) is typical of synoptic texts on educational administration that usually include a chapter on leadership. Lunenberg and Ornstein summarize the state of the art on leadership studies in their opening paragraph in the leadership chapter of their text:

> Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the topic of leadership has been the object of extensive study. During this time, both researchers and practitioners have sought to analyze and define leadership. Today there are almost as many definitions of effective leadership as there are researchers who have studied the concept. More than 3000 empirical investigations have examined leadership. . . . Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus point out that the research has produced more than 350 definitions of effective leadership with no "clear and unequivocal understanding as to what distinguishes leaders from nonleaders." (p. 112)

Although definitions of leadership are numerous and vary widely, and models of leadership abound, one thing emerges loud and clear: No one leadership style, trait profile, or set of skills works best in all schools. Although recent research on effective principals is generally supportive of the principal as a facilitator and team builder, rather than the buck-stops-here boss and autocrat, results are quite mixed about specific sets of behaviors or the one fail-safe approach to leadership that is best in all situations. Ann Lieberman (1995) asserts:

> The 1990s view of leadership calls for principals to act as partners with teachers, involved in a collaborative quest to examine practices and improve schools. . . . Principals are not expected to control teachers but to support them and to create opportunities for them to grow and develop. (p. 55)

Just how this is accomplished, however, defies specific how-to and prescription. Each school is unique and may require the use of varied, less than ideal, stopgap leadership measures in progressing to the point at which the school community (i.e., teachers, parents, students, community members) are ready, willing, and able to embrace and participate in what is generally accepted

as today's most ideal organizational state, which is school-as-community, with strong systems of collaboration and shared decision making.

To be sure, effective leadership, if it is any one thing, is contextually based (Lunenberg & Ornstein, 2000; Razik & Swanson, 1995). To act expediently and effectively, then, requires something other than a prescribed formula or set of how-to's for today's school principal. The ultimate test of leaders' expertise is how well they know and understand themselves and the context—both organizational and people dimensions—in which they works. Only then can one be expected to know what approach to leadership is likely to be successful in helping an organization and its people to improve or excel.

The work of a contemporary school leader, then, is infinitely more complex than acquiring particular skills, knowledge, or style. Although all of these are important, the toughest challenge is knowing when and how to use and adjust one's skills and knowledge to meet the demands of the situation, which is oftentimes unique and may indeed have little precedence in the literature. Delicate work? Ah, yes indeed! One might even call it professional prowess, this craft of school principals. But impossible? Certainly not. Based on a well-developed set of professional and personal values and a school vision—both clearly student centered—a principal's course has sufficient compass and steadfastness to guide him or her; the skills, knowledge, and style become the tools that help the principal adjust and tweak his or her role as principal to meet the needs of the situation. With such grounding, understanding, and adaptability, a principal is more likely to be successful in leading the school toward realizing its vision and meeting its mission of educating all of the children in its charge.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE PRINCIPALSHIP: MAKING THE GRADE

No principal today can expect to survive, much less excel, without a good understanding, keen appreciation, and philosophical acceptance of (without being overwhelmed by) the need for schools and educators to be accountable. The early 1980s, with

the nationally commissioned report *A Nation at Risk*, ushered in a decade of similar, accusatory reports condemning America's schools for their mediocrity and shameless waste of the almighty tax dollar. These reports resulted in a nationwide push for more accountability from public schools in the United States and a flurry of reform efforts that continue today. Various analyses have been made of the accountability movement during the last 20 years and are similar to the following position taken by the National Commission for the Principalship (1990):

> Major environmental transformations [in the 1980s] created new expectations for schools as well as generated requirements for new organizational processes and structures. Among these expectations were demands that student achievement match international standards, that schools assume responsibility for graduating higher percentages of students, and that operational structures be decentralized. Many principals were unprepared for these new circumstances. (p. xxi)

Essentially, the movement has progressed from demanding more of students by increasing graduation requirements and raising curriculum standards to seeking more accountability from teachers and teacher preparation programs to today's greater emphasis on accountability from principals and programs preparing school administrators.

In response to the reports, to the public's growing discontent with their children's education, and to what legislators perceive as their constitutional responsibility, state legislatures have for the past 15 years spouted forth a nonstop stream of mandates and initiatives aimed at making schools more accountable for student achievement. The frantic search for the key to improving the nation's schools has led to a litany of ill-conceived, poorly implemented initiatives that for the most part have been woefully lacking in substance, research base, or commitment sufficient for successful implementation. Just as prepackaged kits and teacher-proof curricula were no panaceas to improving our schools' science and math curricula in the 1960s and 1970s, when the successful launching of the Soviet Union's *Sputnik* created the race to space, neither are today's legislated standards for schools

and districts the cure for the ills of today's schools. Prescriptive, mandated, prepackaged approaches to school reform have not worked, then or now. Such approaches defy a fundamental principle of change and improvement: Significant, lasting change must come from within people and organizations.

In the wake of the failure of most of these top-down reform efforts, the tide has most recently turned to individual school-based accountability. For example, the statewide report card issued annually by many of the states has typically reported its results by school district; more recently, however, in many states (e.g., North Carolina, Mississippi) these reports are now being based on the individual school's performance. The grade is generated by using a formula to assess a school's effectiveness, which uses a number of criteria, including standardized test results. Depending on the state, the measures to help those schools who fall below a certain grade vary. Underperforming schools are usually targeted for special assistance and given a stipulated time in which they must show improvement or suffer a variety of consequences (e.g., replacement of the principal, replacement of the principal and underperforming teachers, takeover by a community parenting council, loss of certain funding, or state takeover).

Of course, the flip side of the punitive coin is the reward a few states now offer to teachers, principals, schools, and districts for performing above their anticipated grade. Heeding the pleas of teachers and school administrators, some states have adjusted the grading formula to level the playing field for schools and districts with large numbers of students who come from low-socioeconomic homes and whose parents have little formal education; these states now offer rewards for these districts and schools that exceed their expected performance levels. Furthermore, the grade is often now based on students' improvement (i.e., how much they gain during the year), not just on how high their test scores are at the close of the year.

Although some of these latest grading adjustments seem fairer and more sensitive to the realities of varying school populations, what has yet to happen on a large scale is the creation of accountable systems for determining accountability. Authentic accountability for children's academic performance requires the inclusion of all parties who are responsible for children—schools, districts, board members, parents, communities, social services,

churches, state agencies, and federal agencies. It also requires that everyone be held accountable for their degree of cooperation and collaboration. After all, most folks understand that a child's success or failure at school is not a sole function of how well the school is doing. That child's chances for school success or failure begin long before the child gets to school and are impacted by a host of people, experiences, and circumstances outside the school's domain.

It is virtually impossible to ferret out the complex, multiple variables that influence students' achievement to assign individual responsibility to each contributing force. Until buck-passing, finger-pointing, and grading school performance are replaced by sincere attempts to share responsibility and accountability for children's well-being through strong partnerships in the complex tasks of raising and educating them, little progress is likely to be made by holding any one constituency of the child's support system disproportionately accountable. Good principals know this. That is why these outstanding leaders, though not ignoring the various accountability initiatives requiring their attention and feedback, clearly do not rely or dwell on such negative, shallow measures of accountability. Instead, effective leaders focus their mental energy and the bulk of their study, time, and attention on making good things happen for children. They do not waste their precious time and energy casting blame or making excuses. They choose instead to spend their time looking for ways to make children's lives better and often take the initiative to coordinate and engage the efforts of various people, agencies, and groups that make up their students' support systems. They are true leaders and advocates for children and as such realize the importance of extending their leadership beyond the boundaries of their school campus to ensure that children in their schools get the resources and nurturing essential for their good health and well-being. This is the bedrock of children's success at school.

STANDARDS FOR TODAY'S SCHOOL LEADERS: MEASURING UP!

An outgrowth of the accountability movement is the companion trend toward developing national standards pertaining to all

aspects of public schools—the curriculum, student performance, teacher preparation programs and state licensing, teacher performance, administrator preparation programs and licensing, and administrator performance.

America 2000, commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, and its companion reform plan, *Goals 2000*, fueled the fire for developing standards initiated in the late 1980s. A number of national subject-area professional groups responded to the report by developing national curriculum goals and objectives for students at all grade levels (e.g., National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, American Association for the Advancement of Science). Although having no official authority unless adopted by states or school districts, these standards nevertheless have created a flurry of attention. Some states have either adopted the standards wholesale or adapted them for use as their required statewide curriculum. The issue of developing national tests based on the national standards continues to be hotly debated.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards recently completed its national standards for licensing teachers. Again, although this board serves in no official capacity, its influence is indisputably strong as states struggle to develop professional licensing standards and examinations that meet the public's growing thirst for proof of teachers' competence.

Similar to the teachers' national standards, standards for the preparation of school principals have been developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration. Universities across the country are undergoing major reforms of their preparation programs to conform to the new standards set in motion by this national board, which is supported by prestigious professional organizations such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals. These standards originally developed by the National Commission for the Principalship include 21 principal performance domains categorized into four areas (Thomson, 1990, pp. 21-25) that "blend the traditional content-driven curricula with leadership and process skills to create a new framework for preparing principals" (p. 19):

- *Functional Domains*—seven skills areas that address the organizational processes and techniques by which the mission of

the school is achieved. They provide for the educational program to be realized and allow the institution to function.

- *Programmatic Domains*—six skills areas that focus on the scope and framework of the educational program. They reflect the core technology of schools' instruction, and the related supporting services, developmental activities, and resource base.

- *Interpersonal Domains*—four skills areas that recognize the significance of interpersonal connections in schools. They acknowledge the critical value of human relationships to the satisfaction of personal and professional goals and to the achievement of organizational purpose.

- *Contextual Domains*—four skills areas that reflect the world of ideas and forces within which the school operates. They explore the intellectual, ethical, cultural, economic, political, and governmental influences upon schools, including traditional and emerging perspectives. (pp. 21-25)

An even more recent set of standards, less comprehensive and detailed than those stipulated by The National Commission for the Principalship, is titled *Standards for School Leaders* (Interstate School Leaders Consortium, 1996). This set of standards, quite similar in scope and content to the domains of the commission, was likewise developed by nationally representative members from 24 state education agencies and various professional organizations. This group of professionals, known as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, operates under the auspices of the Council of Chief State School Officers. Their set of school leadership standards is distilled in the following six statements, which center on student performance, by beginning each statement with the following: *A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by . . .*

> Standard No. 1: . . . facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

> Standard No. 2: . . . advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
>
> Standard No. 3: . . . ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
>
> Standard No. 4: . . . collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
>
> Standard No. 5: . . . acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
>
> Standard No. 6: . . . understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (pp. 10-20)

Although this latter set of standards is double-dipped in "student-centered" language, the content of the standards themselves varies little from the domains illustrated in the standards. Similarly, examination of a dozen or more sets of leadership standards that now proliferate the educational leadership landscape reveals much similarity among them in what is expected of today's school leader (e.g., Kentucky's Administrator Standards for Preparation and Certification, 1994; Mississippi Administrator Standards and Indicators, 1996; National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education's Curriculum Guidelines for School Administration). Knowing and understanding standards for principals (i.e., standards for a principal's behavior, knowledge, and dispositions that are available nationwide) is fundamental to being a responsible, effective school leader. That brings us full swing, back to the introduction of this chapter, where I cited Kent Peterson's list of behaviors typical of effective contemporary principals, which contained a clear inclusion of both leadership and management competencies and stipulates the importance of "providing for instructional leadership" as a major function of today's principal.

DEFINING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Yet there remains much muddled thinking about what constitutes instructional leadership, how it is distinguished from leadership in general, and what behaviors are those most closely tied to improving teaching and learning. About instructional leadership, Daresh and Playko (1995) state the following:

> Despite the amount of discussion about, as well as support for, the concept of instructional leadership, little has been done to define the concept operationally. . . . [W]e now recognize that individuals other than principals might engage in instructional leadership behaviors. Second, we have increasingly realized that instructional leadership can take forms that go well beyond direct intervention in classroom activities. (p. 132)

Although lacking specific behaviors or a prescriptive orientation, the definition of instructional leadership rendered by Daresh and Playko (1995) clearly puts the focus on student learning: "Instructional leadership consists of direct or indirect behaviors that significantly affect teacher instruction and, as a result, student learning" (p. 33). These behaviors are many and far-reaching and quite similar to those patterns indicative of effective leadership in general. According to Jerry Patterson (1993), five behavioral patterns emerged in his comprehensive study of what behaviors characterize effective instructional leaders:

1. They provide a sense of vision to their schools (i.e., they can articulate their own vision, help develop a shared vision, and keep the school's vision and mission alive throughout the day-to-day school operation).

2. They engage in participatory management (i.e., they empower others by involving stakeholders appropriately in the school's operation and decision-making processes).

3. They provide support for instruction (i.e., they recognize instruction as the strongest facilitator of the school's top priority—students' learning).

4. They monitor instruction (i.e., they are aware of what's going on in classrooms).
5. They are resourceful (i.e., they find ways to accomplish goals despite barriers).

These behaviors are not prescriptive; they can be enacted in different ways, with many styles, and with various philosophies. They are patterns of behavior, not specifically defined behaviors. Very different leadership personalities can be accommodated in these broad-stroke recommendations. This toolbox text is not intended to provide overly simplistic, prescriptive advice. Instead, my intention as author is to assist principals—given their own special styles and settings—to find their own way and make the most of their unique talents, abilities, resources, and circumstances in furthering the central mission of all leadership in schools: the education and well-being of young people.

POINTERS FOR THE PRINCIPAL

→ Understand the principal's evolving role.

- ➢ Manage as only a part of leading.
- ➢ Facilitate leadership at large; abandon chief in charge.
- ➢ Expand your style/skill repertoire; forget one-size-fits-all leadership models.

→ Deal responsibly with accountability.

- ➢ Develop the school community's vision of student success.
- ➢ Encourage accountability among all stakeholders.
- ➢ Mobilize community resources in children's behalf.
- ➢ Forge ways to help children succeed.
- ➢ Avoid excuse-making orientations to thinking and behaving.

→ Be professionally fit.

- ➢ Read and reflect often.
- ➢ Seek ways to improve yourself, mentor others, and contribute to your profession.
- ➢ Embrace change as your friend—it will keep you active, alert, and growing.
- ➢ Be the number one model of lifelong learner.

→ Hone your role in instructional leadership.

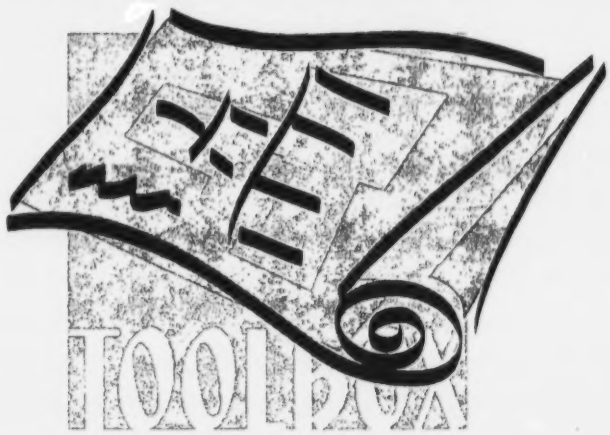
- ➢ Visit classrooms daily.
- ➢ Communicate your passion for the success of teachers and students in word and deed.
- ➢ Operationalize the school's vision in your day-to-day functioning.
- ➢ Facilitate team-based instructional leadership.

→ Persevere.

- ➢ Be guided by the school's goals.
- ➢ Be visibly supportive.
- ➢ View mistakes as opportunities to learn.
- ➢ Enjoy your work.

CHAPTER THREE

Blueprints for Success



In the absence of organizational purpose, leadership does not exist. And if the purpose is not compelling, why would anyone want to follow?

—Schwahn and Spady (1998, p. 45).

A leader does the right things, which implies a goal, a direction, an objective, a vision, a dream, a path, a reach.

—Warren Bennis (1997, p. 95).

Developing shared vision is the daily work of leaders. It is ongoing and never ending.

—Peter Senge (1990).

The foundation of effective leadership is thinking through the organization's mission, defining it and establishing it, clearly and visibly.

—Peter Drucker (1992).

- ❑ Mission
- ❑ Vision
- ❑ Goals and Objectives
- ❑ Strategies

The importance of direction to the work of any organization is obvious. A variety of expressions is often used to reflect this regard for direction: "If you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you've arrived?"; "So what have you accomplished if you're driving the bus and arrive safely at your chosen destination only to discover you left your passengers at the gate?"; or "Our reach should exceed our grasp, or else what's a Heaven for?"

Accordingly, much has been written about the importance of providing direction as a major role of leadership, especially in times and contexts of extreme flux and change. The newer models of leadership call on contemporary principals and CEOs to shift from an old paradigm of "teller" to one of facilitator of an organization's direction and operation as one way of helping people deal with change in less hostile, nonresistant ways. The importance, inevitability, and desirability of change in an organization and its people are frequent issues in current literature on effective schools and leadership. Principals labeled as change agents, visionaries, and strategic planners are all indicative of the very basic expectation of today's school leader as a key player in providing direction to the organization.

A casual look at the various professional standards proliferating the landscape of school leadership bears witness to the importance of principals being able not only to articulate clearly their own guiding principles and personal visions of school excellence but also to lead others (i.e., parents, students, teachers, staff, community) in the organization to the ultimate shared development and articulation of the organization's operational blueprints—that is, a mission, a vision, goals and objectives, and strategies for

accomplishing the organization's mission. In fact, the processes whereby stakeholders engage in the creation of these documents are deemed more critical and valuable than the actual documents themselves.

This chapter is included as an essential part of the instructional leader's toolbox and contains helpful suggestions to facilitate the work of leaders in providing direction to the school. It strategically follows the chapters dealing with the important tools of self-analysis, with the focus on what the leader as an individual believes and values. Such an examination of values and beliefs by the leader and the school community provides the framework, or compass, for setting in motion, and guiding, the organization's working directional documents, its blueprints for excellence—mission, vision, goals, objectives, and strategies.

MISSION

A mission addresses an organization's fundamental purpose. It answers the following question: Why do we exist as an organization? "The mission statement," cautions Elaine McEwan (2003) to school leaders, "will not be yours alone; however, it will belong to the school community. It will incorporate the collective vision of everyone and will be a consensus statement of where you want to go together" (p. 68).

Although often referred to as a statement, the mission may actually be several statements, even a paragraph in length. However, the central target of the mission of any school organization—the improvement of students' educational experiences and achievement—should be clearly evident. A distinction is made here between school slogans and school missions. Frequently, slogans are confused with missions, but each is useful and each serves a different purpose. Missions are more in-depth treatments of a school's purposes than are slogans. Ideally, slogans stem from visions and the mission and are symbolic, catchy statements that help the school and community bond together and remind a school community of its shared vision and mission for the school. As an example of the role an effectively used slogan can serve, Newman and Simmons (2000) share one high school principal's experience:

> Part of the work of [leadership] is to develop a shared vision with clear goals that focus on increasing student achievement. The leaders' responsibilities are to provide direction and guidance for the implementation of that vision, to keep it constantly evident in their own words and actions, and to help the school community remain faithful to the vision in its daily practice. . . . In the hallway at Fenway High School in Boston is a poster that reads: *Work hard. Be yourself. Do the right thing.* Principal Larry Myatt first used these phrases several years ago . . . with a class of incoming students. . . . The motto now serves as a persistent reminder of what the school community stands for. It is effective, unlike many mere slogans, because it clearly encapsulates Fenway's shared strategic vision, with its focus on high achievement and high expectations for everyone—students, teachers, parents, and staff members alike. (p. 11)

Of their identified 15 performance roles of a leader, Schwahn and Spady (1998) place "creating a compelling purpose which they involve all stakeholders in creating and maintaining" (p. 45) as the top priority. Schwahn and Spady contend a major component in creating a compelling purpose is the development of a clear, concise, easy-to-remember mission statement that "answers the questions of why the organization exists and its fundamental business" (p. 45):

> To be effective, mission statements must be brief, discriminating, challenging, and exciting. If the mission statement isn't driving all decision making throughout the district (or the school), it simply isn't having the impact that it should. One true test of a mission statement's influence is to realize that if organizational members can't easily state the mission, then the organization doesn't have one. (pp. 45-46)

A word of caution: It is more important that the mission be genuine, shared, and well thought out, rather than catchy and easy to recite word for word. Without question, however, members of the organization should be able to define easily and in their own words the school's mission, and their individual renditions should vary only in semantics, not in content. Slogans are helpful in

bonding the organization's members together and reminding them of its greater vision and mission, but rarely do slogans have the substance worthy of being labeled a mission.

Stephen Covey (1991) gets at this same issue—mission statements versus platitudes. He emphasizes the importance of the process in developing among the school's stakeholders a shared mission statement:

> I don't mean a mission statement that was cranked out over a weekend at an executive retreat, but one that is the product of effort and input from every level of the organization. Most organizational mission statements are no more than a bunch of lovely PR platitudes framed on a wall. However, a mission statement has the potential of being a living constitution—something that embodies deeply held values and that is based on timeless principles. (pp. 184-185)

Warren Bennis (1997) agrees: "Companies are great at printing mission statements on 3 x 5 laminated plaques along with elaborate lists of company vision and values. Dazzling documents like these are useless" (p. 160). Useless, that is, if these fancy documents lack the vested interest that results from broad-based involvement of their development involving all of the stakeholders in the organization.

Covey (1991) and others saliently advise that the real power of developing a shared mission in an organization lies more in the process than in the actual document. This is precisely why it cannot be a top-down directive, generated by a few and disseminated to the masses; without the process of dialogue among the various constituencies of an organization (i.e., exploration of values and beliefs, genuine sharing of differences of opinion, earnest pursuits of common ground and mutually shared purposes), no common mission can be reached. Without the process's by-products—enhanced appreciation for and understanding of each other and how the group thinks about education, children, and learning—the chances of having the group focused enough to improve teaching and learning significantly throughout the school is not likely. Thus, attempts to preempt the rather messy, time-consuming, oftentimes emotionally charged and intellectually challenging processes involved in broad-based development of

an organization's commitment to a mission document, in the long run, impede the school community's ability to function as a team characterized by a passion and drive associated with a clear sense of mutually derived purpose.

VISION

Everybody talks about vision, but how many educators can readily, passionately, and with sufficient detail describe their visions of an excellent school? Bennis and Goldsmith (1997) claim "vision can be *pictured*—it has substance, form, and color. By vision we mean a picture that can be seen with the mind's eye" (p. 105). Although all of the blueprints discussed in this chapter are useful and work in tandem to give direction to a school community's work, vision is the most emotionally charged and intellectually challenging to produce.

The leadership framework designed by Brown and Irby (2001) and proposed in Chapter 1 requires reflection and clarification about the vital aspects of school, which all educational leaders should have thought about and be able to describe with some degree of specificity. Educational leaders should be passionate about these aspects and persistent in fulfilling them in their daily work. Additional criteria that may be helpful for developing a vision have been developed by Bennis and Goldsmith (1997). Consider their following list of characteristics of a vision:

- A vision engages your heart and spirit.
- A vision taps into embedded concerns and needs.
- A vision asserts what you and your colleagues want.
- A vision is something worth going for.
- A vision provides meaning to the work you and your colleagues do.
- By definition a vision is a little cloudy and grand (if it were clear, it wouldn't be a vision).
- A vision is simple.
- A vision is a living document that can always be expanded.
- A vision provides a starting place from which to get to more and more levels of specificity.
- A vision is based in two deep human needs: quality and dedication. (p. 106)

The first step in the important work of creating a school vision is determining its community's individual, personal visions of what an excellent school looks like and how the people in it function. In excellent schools, principals and school leaders are not the sole proprietors of personal visions of school excellence; the more visionary, reflective, and passionate are all stakeholders of the school, the more likely the school's performance will improve and move to exceptionality. However, leaders must assume the role of exemplar and standard bearer in visioning and passionately pursuing a better state of school operation to facilitate the entire school community's creation of a vision.

Peter Senge (1990) saliently warns of the short-sightedness of an outmoded, traditional perception of top-down, top-heavy leadership that assumes an organization's members are "powerless, lack personal vision, and are incapable of mastering the dynamics of change" (p. 45). Michael Fullan (1997) similarly asserts, "As stewards, leaders continually seek and oversee the broader purpose and direction of the organization. . . . The challenge is to improve education in the only way it can be—through the day-to-day actions of empowered individuals" (pp. 13, 47). It is only when the individuals—all of the individuals—in an organization are able to dream and envision more ideal states of existence and operation that the collective voice's vision—the shared vision—is likely to be developed with the sincerity, vested interest, and rigor needed for it to be meaningful and truly operational each day within the school.

Although visions are by nature grand, optimistic, and abstract, as they evolve, the more concrete and specific they become. Fullan (1997), referring to Block's *The Empowered Manager* (1987), describes the attributes of a good vision:

> The dialogue about vision, according to Block, should strive to achieve three qualities: depth, clarity, and responsibility relative to the vision. Depth is the degree to which the vision statement is personally held. Clarity comes from insisting on specific images. Vagueness . . . "is a way of not making a commitment to a vision." Responsibility involves moving from helplessness to active ownership: " . . . the primary reason we demand that people create a vision statement is to reinforce the belief that all of us are engaged in the process of creating this organization." (p. 124)

Ultimately, through the subsequent development of goals, objectives, and strategies, the schoolwide, shared vision is realized in part, revisited often, and revamped as needed to meet the ever-changing needs of the students and the often-changing levels of sophistication and skill of the dreamers. Fullan (1997) speaks of the complexity of bringing together multiple personal visions in trying to arrive at one shared, schoolwide vision: "Visions will tend to converge. . . . This will sometimes result in sharper differences, but the more serious problem seems to be the absence of clearly articulated visions rather than a multiplicity of them" (p. 35).

Creating a common vision is a process, not an event. Not only is it ongoing, but it also takes time to come to any degree of fruition in the first place. According to Jo Blase and Joseph Blase (1997), "Defining a vision, working toward it, and sustaining related efforts is a profound challenge" (p. 103). Depending on the situation and the people involved, the vision's initial creation may take several years of reflective dialogue and emotional and intellectual rigor. Then, of course, a vision is never final. The evolutionary nature of a vision is what ensures its continued relevancy and the regeneration of the school's and community's enthusiasm and commitment to the work and resources necessary for the school to operate routinely as an improving organization.

Unless a school community engages in the personal visioning and the reflective dialoguing essential to the development and articulation of a meaningful, shared vision of what excellent instruction and teaching means to them, the quality of education afforded their children is likely to remain mediocre at best. Without leaders who recognize the important role they play in facilitating this work, such processes rarely if ever occur. "An ethic of care," asserts Lynn Beck (1994), "would compel school leaders to work to move visions, hopes, and plans beyond the conceptual stage into practice" (p. 82).

At the center of a comprehensive vision of an excellent school, principals and other school leaders should have clear notions of what constitutes excellent teaching and learning and the role they should play in providing excellent instructional leadership. "Schools' guiding statements," espouses Lew Allen (2001) in his recent *Phi Delta Kappan* article, "are more likely to lead to action when they address in very specific ways the type of teaching

(Text continues on page 45)

BOX 3.1

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP VISION QUOTIENT ASSESSMENT

How's your ILVQ (Instructional Leadership Vision Quotient)? How much have you reflected on and how readily can you articulate responses to the following statements, which effective instructional leadership entails? Earnestly completing the following statements should help you to focus your thinking and decide if you need to clarify any areas. These statements will also help you develop a more complete vision to improve your leadership impact, especially in the area of instruction.

In my vision of an ideal school . . .

- Students are learning (what)_____
  _____
  _____
  _____.
- Students are learning by (how)_____
  _____
  _____.
- The school climate reflects the importance of teaching and learning (how)_____
  _____
  _____
  _____.
- Decisions about curriculum and instruction are made by (whom and how)_____
  _____
  _____
  _____.
- Instruction looks like (describe the things you envision in a school where teaching and learning are happening as you think it ideally should)_____
  _____
  _____.

- Teachers believe (about children and learning)_____
_____
_____
_____.
- Parents participate in their child's learning (how)____
_____
_____
_____.
- The principal spends the majority of his or her time (where in the building) _____
_____. The principal is (doing what)
_____
_____.
- The assistant principal spends the majority of his or her time (where in the building)_____.
The assistant principal is (doing what)_____
_____
_____.
- Student achievement is assessed (how and by whom)
_____
_____
_____.
- Faculty meetings' agendas primarily consist of _____
_____
_____.
Faculty meetings are conducted (how)_____
_____.
- The content and nature of staff development is determined (how)_____
_____ (by whom)_____
_____(for whom)_____
_____ (assessed how)_____
_____.
- Teacher performance evaluation consists of (how)____
_____
_____.

- The criteria for teacher evaluation are decided by _____ _____ _____.
- Teacher evaluations are performed by _____ _____. They are performed for (what key purposes)_____ _____ _____.
- Student achievement is tied to teacher evaluation (how)_____ _____.
- The school schedule and organization reflect a focus on optimizing students' learning (how)_____ _____ _____ _____.
- The process used to determine the schedule and organization (what)_____ _____.
- Decisions made to implement new programs, do away with programs, or update and revise programs are made by (whom)_____ _____.

and learning experiences that people believe will help their students realize the stated purposes and desired results found in the statements" (p. 291).

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Having a clearly established purpose and a well-articulated vision of an ideal school, the next logical directional piece essential for moving an organization to a higher level of operation—for moving a vision from concept to practice—is the formulation of the day-to-day working documents—the school's instructional

goals and objectives. The goals and objectives should emerge from and further direct the energy of the organization toward fulfilling the school community's stated mission and vision. Goals and objectives provide the specificity essential to guide the daily work of the organization. Those school goals that particularly relate to what is taught and how it is taught are usually referred to as instructional goals. However, if a goal cannot be tied ultimately to what happens in the classroom, to teaching and learning, then its appropriateness as a goal is questionable. The litmus test for the appropriateness of any school goal or objective—indeed, even any expenditure or decision—is asking "In whose interest?" was each made. If students' welfare and achievement are not the answer to the litmus test question, where, then, is the legitimacy of the goal, expenditure, or decision?

The role of the leader is to facilitate, not dictate, these important directional documents. In fact, the work of defining and tailoring instructional goals and objectives to the individual school site should be developed primarily by those most involved in their delivery—the classroom teachers. The work should reflect a team effort, however, among the school's stakeholders (teachers and administrators primarily but with appropriate input from parents, students, and staff), with teachers taking a lead partnership role with the principal in breaking the larger vision and mission blueprints into more concrete, obtainable parts.

If the vision and mission documents of a school have credibility, they clearly reflect the central importance of students and learning to the work of educational institutions. Elaine McEwan (2001), writes, "if the primary purpose of schooling is learning, then determining what students need to know, how and when it should be taught, and whether or not these instructional goals have been reached are paramount for instructional leaders" (pp. 177-180). McEwan includes the following in her checklist of key indicators of a principal's effectiveness in establishing and implementing instructional goals:

1. Provides for communication with staff regarding the achievement standards and the improvement goals of the school.
2. Incorporates the designated state and district standards into the development and implementation of the local school's instructional programs.

3. Ensures that schoolwide and individual classroom instructional activities are consistent with state, district, and school standards.

4. Use multiple sources of data, both qualitative and quantitative, to evaluate progress and plan for continuous improvement.

The more the school's instructional goals and objectives are tailored to meet the unique needs of the school's specific population of children, the more likely is students' academic success. Although most states have legislated, mandated curricula—and though some school districts have developed their own elaborated versions of these curricula—the most instructionally effective schools are those that have taken those state- and system-level curricula (which are generally open to a good deal of interpretation) as umbrella documents to guide the work of their own more specifically defined, school-based curricula. Although it is not in their purview to change the mandated curricula, individual school teams can make it more personalized for their population of students and teachers by answering the questions in Box 3.2.

"Faculty, administration, students, and parents should be aware of the instructional goals and assessment procedures for the school and for specific grade levels," asserts Rossow (1990, p. 9). In writing about the importance of focus and direction in a school, Rossow further contends,

> the principal should be able to answer the following question: What are the curriculum goals for each grade, and what is the management plan for carrying out these goals? If the faculty in a school building were polled, their answers to the following three questions should be very similar: What business are you in? How is business going? What evidence do you have for your answers? (p. 9)

The best curriculum guides are those that provide a school-based dimension and detail for teachers, not in a prescriptive manner but rather in a spirit of support, coordination, and a sharing of resources and expertise. Novice teachers, weak teachers, and teachers new to a system stand to benefit most from such curriculum assistance, but, more important, the participative process of developing these teaching aides engenders among the

BOX 3.2

SCHOOL-BASED CURRICULUM AND TEACHING DECISIONS

- How can national-, state-, and system-level goals and objectives best be taught to our students and in what order?
- What will the curriculum emphases be?
- What teaching strategies, materials, and resources should we employ?
- How will students be assessed?
- What time frame is recommended for teaching the various goals and objectives?

school community a can-do team spirit. The result of such shared processes for dealing with instructional goals and objectives at the school level is far more than a document—a directional set of goals and objectives. The most important results of such a process is the professional empowerment that results from ownership in the design and control of the essence of school enterprise—the teaching and learning that goes on in classrooms.

STRATEGIES

Strategies are about action and professional know-how. The most eloquently written mission and vision, the most clearly constructed goals and objectives are limp without well-designed strategies to bring them to life. Instructional goals and objectives have little power without accompanying strategies for their attainment. The important work of developing strategies for teaching can and most often should be developed at many levels:

- By a single teacher or a teacher and a mentor (usually in the form of weekly and daily lesson plans)
- Between teams of teachers—grade-level, vertical, or subject-area teams (in the form of units, field trips, shared projects)

- Between a curriculum leadership team representative of all the teachers and with representative, appropriate input from parents and community leaders as well as students (in the form of curriculum guides or handbooks, which frequently offer suggestions for sequencing goals and objectives, pacing and making appropriate time allowances, using textbooks and software, and designating state test items assessing and evaluating students' level of mastery of the goals and objectives)

Of all the directional documents addressed thus far in this chapter, strategies are the ones most often left up to teachers to develop on their own. Teachers, as professionals, must be allowed to make these ultimate strategic teaching decisions for their unique group of students. Dictating how a teacher instructs is clearly inappropriate and far too prescriptive; however, as a standard part of the school's operation, having routine opportunities and provisions for teachers to share their expertise in developing and improving their own teaching strategies is not only appropriate but also absolutely essential to providing good instructional leadership.

Such routine opportunities—which become characteristic of a school's culture—designated specifically for teachers to engage in professional dialogue about their work help to ensure that teaching and learning are the school's focus. "Principals play a key role," Allen (2001) emphasizes, "in helping people find the time to write statements and to bring them to life. It is imperative that principals give this work a high priority and help direct the appropriate resources to it" (p. 292). A principal's leadership in making it possible for teachers to meet, talk, and plan—with the principal often participating—within and across grade levels and subject areas sends a powerful message: Classroom instruction and student achievement are expected to be continually analyzed and reflected upon—as well as evolve— as a routine part of the school day.

The complexity of teaching and meeting the diverse needs of today's students, especially, requires that teachers pool their energy, resources, and expertise to do the job best. The teaching support systems, level of professionalism, program coordination, and curriculum articulation among teachers that result from

reflective dialogue about their work (especially regarding their shared beliefs, values, mission, vision, and instructional goals and objectives) greatly enhance a school's total performance and its quality as a true learning community, wherein the adults exemplify the importance of continued learning, growth, and development.

POINTERS FOR THE PRINCIPAL

→ Mission gives purpose to an organization and its people.

- ➢ Involve stakeholders in a process to develop the mission.
- ➢ Differentiate between catchy slogans and authentic mission statements.
- ➢ Use the mission as a unifying theme.

→ Visions are dreams of how best to accomplish the mission.

- ➢ Help all stakeholders create a vision of what their ideal school is like.
- ➢ Develop one collective vision from the sharing of individual visions.
- ➢ Revisit visions often and facilitate their "revision" to reflect the school's improving, evolving status.
- ➢ Encourage frequent visioning about teaching and learning.

→ Goals and objectives are the vision's operational blueprints.

- ➢ Break the vision up into manageable parts with supportive goals and objectives.
- ➢ Tailor national, state, and system level goals and objectives to fit your school and students.
- ➢ Create school-based curriculum documents with teachers taking the lead.

→ Strategies specify how to accomplish goals and objectives.

- ➢ Provide a role model, support, and time for teachers to read, reflect, and dialogue about improving instruction.
- ➢ Formalize mentoring of new teachers to mediate their entry into teaching.
- ➢ Focus professional development on teacher collaboration, so they can hone their teaching skills and strategize to help children succeed in school.

CHAPTER FOUR

A School's Organizational Superglue

School climate may be one of the most important ingredients of a successful instructional program. It is the school's "personality." Without a climate that creates a harmonious and well-functioning school, a high degree of academic achievement is difficult, if not downright impossible, to obtain.

—Hoyle, English, and Steffy (1994, p. 15).

Proficient principals lead the way toward creating a learning environment in which teachers truly teach and students

truly learn. The result is a productive, caring atmosphere in which every student can experience success.

—National Association of Elementary School Principals (1991, p. 11).

Principals are central to shaping a positive and professional school culture and climate. Their daily work and value-driven behaviors shape a positive set of underlying norms, values and beliefs that foster learning. Without leadership in this area, cultures can become stagnant and toxic.

—Deal and Peterson (1998).

- ❑ Assessing School Climate and Culture
- ❑ Leadership Essential to Positive Cultures
- ❑ From Classrooms and Cubbyholes to School Community

You can't see it, touch it, hear or smell it, but you certainly can sense it. In fact, it's so real that you are immediately aware of it when you enter a school. What is it? Smircich (1983, as cited in Snowden & Gorton, 1988) refers to it as an organization's glue, what holds it all together. It's the "way we do things around here," not necessarily what's written in the handbook. It's that nebulous, illusive, invisible, but utterly pervasive and powerful, school quality referred to as culture.

Oftentimes the terms *culture* and *climate* are used interchangeably. Lunenberg and Ornstein (2000), for example, give their interpretation of the terms as follows:

> Over the past dozen or more years, the terms climate, ethos, and culture have been used to capture or describe the norms, values, behaviors, and rituals of the school organization, what the authors would simply call the significant features or personality of the organization. Here we are talking about everything that goes on in a school: how teachers interact and dress, what they talk about, what goes on at meetings,

> their expectations of students, how students behave, how parents interact with the staff, and what type of leadership behavior is exhibited by the principal. (pp. 329-230)

Much has been written about school culture—even more on the term *climate*—and its impact on a school's operation and, ultimately, on student achievement. And though little research exists that can causally, directly tie principals' behavior to student achievement, a leader's impact on culture has been clearly established in the research and literature on organizational leadership and administration (e.g., Austin & Holowenzak, 1985; Deal & Peterson, 1998; Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1990; Larsen, 1987; Peters & Waterman, 1993).

What makes up school culture? Allan Glatthorn (1993) describes a culture's content as the belief system (the core values and guiding beliefs about the schools, students, and learning that inform action), the norms (the shared standards of behavior that derive from that belief system), and the traditions (the valued ways of the past). Of these, the one Glatthorn speculates is most critical is the belief system, the earlier content focus in Chapter 1. Indeed, beliefs form the guiding compass for human behavior. With regard to culture, it is characterized by core beliefs shared by the members of the larger organizational community. These beliefs impact the values and behaviors of the people, which give shape to the culture. That is why it is essential to begin at the beginning—for people to examine their beliefs and come to terms with their differences in establishing a community of shared beliefs on which the organization can function with the least friction and with the most enthusiasm and passion.

Are there identifiable beliefs that characterize the more effective schools? Glatthorn (1993) defines five beliefs that he (based on his and a number of other researchers' work) feels are essential in a school culture that nurtures student achievement and healthy school improvement. These essential core beliefs are that:

1. The school is a cooperative community.
2. There is a belief in common goals.
3. School improvement can be achieved through problem solving orientation.

4. All those in the school—administrators, teachers, and students—can achieve.
5. Instruction is their highest priority. (pp. 63-64)

An interesting caution regarding culture building is worthy of noting. Not all cultures are positive. Both positive and negative school cultures exist, and both can be equally strong and resilient. In fact, many new principals encounter the resistant forces created by negative cultures as they try to establish new norms and beliefs that are essential to facilitating school improvement and enacting change. Thomas Sergiovanni (1991) warns of the dangers inherent in shaping a school's culture:

> Cultural leadership can provide principals with levers to manipulate others that are more powerful than the levers associated with bureaucratic and psychological authority. . . . Further, cultural leadership can become a powerful weapon for masking the many problems of diversity, justice, and equality that confront schools. (pp. 330-331)

Sergiovanni also makes the very valid point that a school community's having strong, shared beliefs, visions, and values as well as democratic processes for making decisions does not guarantee that those shared values and decisions will be good ones (Sergiovanni, 1995). On this negative potential of strong cultures, Weick (1985) adds:

> A coherent statement of who we are makes it harder for us to become something else. Strong cultures are tenacious cultures. Because a tenacious culture can be a rigid culture that is slow to detect changes and opportunities and slow to change once opportunities are sensed, strong cultures can be backward, conservative instruments of adaptation. (p. 385)

Research on academically effective schools emphasizes the high priority given by staff in these schools to student effort and achievement. This priority is usually manifested in the beliefs (usually in the form of a philosophy of teaching and learning), mission, vision, goals, objectives, and strategies created by the school as a team. According to Snowden and

Gorton (1998), the major elements of the culture of an effective school include:

1. A clear set of schoolwide norms that emphasize the values of academic effort and achievement
2. A consistently applied set of expectations that stresses the importance of staff members striving for excellence and students performing up to their potential
3. A system of symbolic activity and sanctions that encourages and rewards effort, improvement, and accomplishment, while discouraging disorder and complacency (p. 110)

In their review of 10 years of research on exemplary schools, Austin and Holowenzak (1985) reinforce the importance of culture, or what they refer to as a school's ethos. They state that the single most important, "cornerstone assumption" underlying their conclusions is that

> expectations about achievement and social behavior held by the principal, other administrators, and teachers strongly affect student achievement and social behavior. . . . Teachers, administrators, and others involved in the school social system communicate their perception of appropriate and proper achievement and their expectations and assessments of students through informal interaction with students and with each other. . . . This interactive process significantly affects the nature of student achievement. (p. 69)

Summarizing their findings, Austin and Holowenzak (1985) speak of the hallmarks of those schools most successful in facilitating their students' achievement:

> We would say that great schools are being run as opposed to running. Exceptional schools have a purpose as opposed to being purposeless. If a school is purposeless, it doesn't mean that the people aren't working hard; it does mean that they have not gotten together and agreed, "This is the way we do it in our school." It is a creation of a sense of fellowship. There is

> a sense of being a member of a warm, supportive family that is the hallmark of exemplary or unusually successful schools. (p. 70)

The work of building a positive school culture supportive of student achievement is multifaceted and complex, but it is an essential, fundamental part of instructional leadership. The compass formed by a strong belief system and the subsequent creation of shared blueprints for the school's operation discussed in former chapters in this book are indicators of the school community's willingness to come together and set in motion a shared sense of purpose and direction. These essential foundations help to create the organization's glue—its people's customs, norms, and values—otherwise known as school culture. Tools for working with culture, to help shape and make it most supportive of student learning, are (1) being able to assess and analyze it, (2) knowing how to operate in a participatory fashion as a key agent in facilitating positive changes in culture, and (3) understanding the importance of building community in the school.

ASSESSING SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

"The first step in promoting good school climate," assert Hoyle et al. (1994), "is to create an awareness of climate and to assess the climate of your school or school district" (p. 20). That awareness, however, must begin with you. New principals in particular should carefully observe their new surroundings to learn about their school's unique culture, most of which is neither written in any handbook nor obvious in written documents. In *Beginning the Principalship* guide book, Daresh (2001) refers to this process of becoming familiar with the culture as reading the signs:

> When a newcomer first arrives, it is critical that person spend time looking very carefully at the whole environment to see what story is being told. . . . If the newcomer takes time to see the subtle signs of the system, rather than quickly looking things over, the true reality of a school will become apparent. (pp. 85-86)

Personally assessing a school's climate can be done quite informally at first by carefully observing, not just looking; listening, rather than just hearing; and being empathetic to the past and how things have been before the new principal's arrival. Daresh and Playko (1997) sagely warn:

> It is critical that new principals not charge into their new settings so forcefully that they do not give honor to the past. Former staff members, practices, policies, and traditions might need to be replaced, but they need to be publicly respected because they represent many subtle aspects of life in an organization. Any newly arrived administrator who does not celebrate the good work of the past will have many unnecessary battles with people who might see the newcomer as unfeeling or insensitive to the local culture. By the same token, remember that one of the things a new leader needs to do is assess the practices of the past and determine what was viewed negatively by teachers, parents, and others. (p. 89)

Daresh further recommends developing an action plan based on a new principal's careful analysis of the present culture by answering the following questions:

1. Describe the most important aspects of the school culture that you inherited as the new principal, that is, the kinds of things you must understand as you step in as the new leader.
2. Which elements of the past culture represent things you cannot comfortably live with as the new principal?
3. What practices appear to have been least popular with faculty, students, or parents?
4. How do you plan to step away from these past practices in a way that will not alienate you from your staff or other important people in your school environment?
5. How do you hope to replace the things you are not comfortable with in your new school? Why?
6. What are some of the features of your new school that you believe should be maintained as much as possible? Why? (Daresh, pp. 89-91)

Assessing and shaping the culture are ongoing processes, however, and are an important function for veteran as well as new leaders. Although cultures are oftentimes resistant to change, change is, nonetheless, inevitable. Culture and climate are particularly impacted by the attrition rate of faculty, staff, and administration in a school and district. The mobility of the students and the community is also a key factor in the stability potential of a school's culture. Therefore, principals must continually keep their fingers on the pulse of what's happening with regard to the values, beliefs, and perceptions of a school's varied stakeholder populations. It is through such awareness that a principal can begin to find opportunities to shape a culture and strengthen it around a central vision and mission that are more conducive to teaching and learning.

In addition to assessing personally (through looking, listening, analyzing) and being cognizant of and sensitive to what makes up a school's culture, there are also many instruments specifically designed to help gather data and assist with the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of a school's culture or climate. Some of the instruments are used as observation guides and checklists for trained observers; other instruments are designed to get perceptual feedback from students, parents, community members, faculty, and staff. Many instruments are available with much variation in the degrees of complexity in administering, scoring, and reporting results. It pays to do your homework and check into the many available instruments on the market. Some of them are quite expensive; others are nominally priced or even free for the asking. Scoring of some is complex and must be done by the publisher, whereas others are easy to hand score.

One well-known, popular instrument is the CFK Ltd. School Profile Questionnaire developed by practitioners and university professors and sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa. It consists of a series of statements with Likert-scale rating responses that address issues of respect, trust, morale, opportunity for input, academic and social growth, cohesiveness, school renewal, and caring in its climate section. In addition to the climate section, the questionnaire includes three other major sections—program determinants, process determinants, and material determinants—with a number of additional issues related to each major section

included in the overall assessment profile. It is quite lengthy in its entirety and is computer scored.

A shorter instrument is the School Climate Inventory developed by Braskamp and Maehr for Grades 3 and above. It is designed to assess both student and teacher attitudes toward the school and its instructional learning climate. It is a multiple-item, paper-and-pencil multiple-choice test assessing four dimensions of school culture: excellence, recognition, power, and affiliation. The teacher's form contains 60 items, takes about 15 minutes to complete, and includes additional scales measuring strength of the culture, degree of commitment or loyalty to the school, and job satisfaction. The student's form contains only 22 items and takes 5 to 10 minutes to complete. It requires computer scoring.

Among the plethora of available climate assessment instruments are those with forms designed to assess specific school populations'—administrator, teacher, student, parent, and community—perceptions of school climate factors. In their book, *Skills for Successful School Leaders*, Hoyle et al. (1994) describe a number of climate assessment instruments. They contend that teacher self-report instruments are the most reliable in evaluating a school's climate:

> Teachers are the principal agents of climate because the way they perceive their situation affects their behavior and effectiveness. . . . No matter how we define or characterize good and bad teaching, it is difficult to see how an unfulfilled, dissatisfied teacher could have a positive effect on students. Thus valid, reliable, teacher self-report instruments are important in evaluating learning climate. (p. 30)

Among the instruments described by these authors is Hoyle's own instrument for assessing school climate, a teacher self-report instrument known as the Learning Climate Inventory (LCI). This instrument is versatile; it is applicable to both elementary and secondary levels and is easy to complete and much briefer than most of the instruments. The LCI is designed to gather teachers' perceptions about their administrators, peers, and teaching situation.

Because the types and contents of tools for assessing school climate varies widely, it is important to decide first what elements of the school climate are ones deemed most critical to assess in your situation and then choose an instrument that best serves your purposes. You can design your own instrument if what is needed is feedback on particular issues that are unique, context specific, and not adequately handled on any of the ready-made instruments. In addition to the host of standardized and non-standardized, self-reporting perceptual instruments and the more objective observation instruments designed to assess various aspects of school climate, instruments designed to measure the perceptions of the principal's leadership (discussed in Chapter 1) also contribute to developing a more complete profile of the school's climate.

Bottom line, the principal (new or veteran) must be a skilled observer and information seeker to operate most effectively. Assessing the culture involves dip-sticking into all areas of the school's operation to learn how its stakeholders feel about the school, students, colleagues, and their leader. The more information you can acquire about how and why the school operates and people's perceptions of various factors that impact the school climate, the more able you as leader will be to make good decisions and guide the school team in its efforts to grow and improve. By isolating and assessing selected climate factors provided on good instruments and observation guides, a principal and his or her leadership team can more readily discern which aspects of the climate need to be altered, eliminated, or reinforced to make it stronger, more student-centered, and open. Hoyle et al. (1994) explain:

> Since the relationship between a learning climate and learner outcomes is global and complex, a combination of observation, self-report instruments, and common sense is the recommended strategy for evaluating the climate of the district and each school. Skills in measuring and maintaining a positive school climate are second to none in importance to good school management. (p. 36)

LEADERSHIP ESSENTIAL TO POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURES

In addition to providing leadership in bringing the school community together to define its shared belief system on which mission, vision, goals, and objectives are grounded, what do we know about more specific behaviors characteristic of leadership that facilitates building a cohesive, student-centered school culture—one in which students' academic achievement is the clear focus of the school's entire operation?

Researcher Terry J. Larsen (1987) found that principals in high-achieving schools were perceived by their faculties to perform six functions significantly more often than principals in lower achieving schools. These six functions—goal setting, coordination, supervision and evaluation, staff development, setting school climate, maintaining school/community relations—were then further defined in the study by specific behaviors that contributed most to each function. With regard to the school climate function, the following principal behaviors were most often identified by teachers from the higher achieving schools in the study:

1. Communicates high expectations for student academic performance to staff
2. Protects faculty from undue pressures, so primary focus is on instruction
3. Personally recognizes the professional accomplishments of faculty including basic goal attainment
4. Assesses faculty morale
5. Establishes a safe/orderly school environment with a clear discipline code (p. 15)

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's 1995 update on effective schooling practices drawn from an extensive research synthesis includes a listing of leadership behaviors that best guide the instructional program (Cotton, 1995). According

to its synthesis, administrators and other instructional leaders' behaviors that are most likely to contribute to effective instruction in a school include the following:

1. Genuinely believing that all students can learn and that the school makes the difference between success and failure
2. Emphasizing learning as the most important reason for being in the school, including emphasis on the importance and value of high achievement in their public speeches and writings
3. Having a clear understanding of the school's mission and being able to state it in direct, concrete terms; establishing an instructional focus that unifies the staff
4. Seeking, recruiting, and hiring staff members who will support the school's mission and contribute to its effectiveness
5. Knowing and being able to apply validated teaching and learning principles
6. Modeling effective teaching practices for staff as appropriate
7. Knowing educational research, emphasizing its importance, sharing it, and fostering its use in problem solving
8. Seeking out innovative curricular programs, observing these, acquainting staff with them, and participating with staff in discussions about adopting or adapting them
9. Setting expectations for curriculum quality through the use of standards and guidelines, and periodically checking the alignment of curriculum with instruction and assessment, establishing curricular priorities, and monitoring the implementation of curriculum

10. Checking student progress frequently, relying on explicit performance data, and making results public in addition to using it with staff to find discrepancies between standards and student performance

11. Expecting all staff to meet high instructional standards by securing staff agreement on a schoolwide instructional model, making classroom visits to observe instruction, focusing supervision activities on instructional improvement, and providing and monitoring staff development activities

12. Communicating the expectation that instructional programs improve over time by providing well-organized, systematic improvement strategies; giving improvement activities high priority and visibility; and monitoring implementation of new practices (pp. 6-16)

What emerges from most of the research and studies on what behaviors are most characteristic of outstanding instructional leaders is the constancy with which they act on behalf of what is best for students throughout the many functions they perform day in and day out. Principals cannot accomplish the work alone, but it is certain that they set the tone that directly impacts the school culture. To profess beliefs, missions, and visions is much easier than to live them. It isn't enough to be able to articulate the importance of teaching and learning being at the center of the school's operation. You must be able to "walk the talk." A true leader not only articulates well the school's primary purpose for being but also demonstrates that deeply held sense of purpose throughout his or her interaction with students, teachers, central office staff, parents, and the community. The degree of consistency between what leaders profess to believe and how they demonstrate those beliefs through their myriad actions is the truest measure of their leadership integrity. It is such integrity that will ultimately have the strongest impact on others in the school community and will be the best tool the principal has in helping to create a healthy, productive culture that will best serve students' needs.

FROM CLASSROOMS AND CUBBYHOLES TO SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Without such integrity, leaders are not likely to earn the respect and trust of others fundamental to a healthy culture and true school community. In their perspectives on what they call the "trust factor" so essential to good leadership, Bennis and Goldsmith (1997) write:

> You must create an environment where people feel free to voice dissent. You do this through behavior. You do not fire people because they goofed, and you actually encourage dissent. You have to reward people disagreeing, to reward innovation, and to tolerate failure. All these are connected with creating a trusting atmosphere—but most of trust comes not from a particular technique, but from the character of the leader. . . . If you are an effective leader, what you say is congruent with what you do, and that is congruent with what you feel, and that is congruent with your vision. (p. 5)

Wholesome school communities are built on a culture of mutual trust and respect among members—students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. This paves the way for internal harmony, cooperation, and smooth functioning, which enable the best instruction and learning to take place.

Although opportunities occur in many unique and unpredictable ways throughout the school day for a principal to capitalize on the moment to reinforce and thus shape a school's culture, the key community building opportunities in Box 4.1 are available to any principal in any context to some degree.

It is critical for leaders to recognize that strong, democratic school cultures must include processes to ensure that people are involved, focused on students' learning, and open to making change, adaptation, and improvement. Despite the potential that organizational culture has to be stubbornly resistant to change, schools will not be effective without a resilient, unifying ethos of caring and commitment to the important work of educating students.

BOX 4.1

SHAPING SCHOOL CULTURE

- Careful recruitment, screening, selection, orientation, and mentoring of new faculty and staff to create a family of philosophical kinship and shared passion for students' success
- Identification of teacher, parent, and community leaders and appropriate delegation of responsibilities to those whose beliefs and visions most closely approximate the leader's and are focused on students' learning
- Planning (with staff) for and being an active participant with staff in well-designed, meaningful staff development that is guided by student performance indicators, focused on improving instruction, and evaluated by one primary criterion—its impact on classroom teaching and learning
- Developing (with staff) and implementing a process of supervision and evaluation that is supportive and team based—rather than competitive and punitive—in its orientation; includes teachers, administrators, and staff; and clearly operates for the primary purpose of improving employees' performance and student learning
- Making and taking time to celebrate and reward students' and staff's accomplishments, outstanding efforts, and performance among the entire school community and calculated risk-taking to improve teaching and learning
- Looking for ways to practice what you preach—and rewarding those who do likewise

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POINTERS FOR THE PRINCIPAL

→ Be an avid, objective information seeker.

- ➢ Maintain a grip on the culture of the school—what people think, how they behave, and what they believe.
- ➢ "Dip-stick" regularly by wandering around, looking, listening, and talking to people.
- ➢ Really get to know teachers, students, parents, and the community.
- ➢ Ask questions, administer surveys, and plunder through old school documents to learn about the school and its past.

→ Thicken the cultural glue with issues of teaching and learning.

- ➢ Although resistant to change, culture is always changing.
- ➢ Capitalize on inevitable change of events to improve the existing culture by strengthening the focus on teaching and learning.
- ➢ Communicate consistently through word and deed your high expectations for everyone's performance and success.
- ➢ Identify and enlist the help of student-centered change agents.

→ Nurture a sense of community and trust.

- ➢ Carefully recruit, screen, and orient new employees.
- ➢ Deal honestly and respectfully with others.
- ➢ Encourage openness and shared problem solving.
- ➢ Reward innovation and risk-taking on behalf of students.
- ➢ Celebrate students' and staff's accomplishments.

CHAPTER FIVE

Organizational Conduits

Communication Strategies for Effective Instructional Leadership

People communicate most eloquently through their actions, not their words.

—*The Principal Series: Facilitator's Guide*, Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (1998, p. 83)

More frequently than not, failures in communication lie at the heart of problems in organization, goal setting, productivity and evaluation.

—Jerome P. Lysaught (1984, p. 104)

Barriers [to communication] can be removed by managing the use of power, eliminating fear, encouraging feedback, and establishing a climate of openness and trust.

—Reginald Leon Green (2001, p. 126)

Quality leaders know that feedback loops are the backbone of continuous improvement.

—Schwahn and Spady (1998, p. 101)

- ❑ Seeking First to Understand
- ❑ Facilitating Collaboration Within the School
- ❑ Connecting With Parents and the Community as Partners

Never more than today has the communication role of school principals been so vital to their success. If principals today are to be effective leaders—as distinguished from managers—they must be masters of the "crucial C's," the processes that, according to Paul Houston (2001), executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, support the work and get it done: connection, communication, collaboration, community building, child advocacy, and curricular choices. In today's organizational leadership, the degree of effectiveness of a leader is tied more directly to one's effectiveness as a communicator more often than it is to any other skills and functions fundamental to being chief administrator. "The image principals project—verbally, nonverbally, and in written communication—forms the dominant perception of the school on the part of the students, staff, parents, and community" (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1991, p. 7). Regardless of the principal's skill and prowess in understanding curriculum, analyzing teaching, budgeting, being visionary, or accomplishing the host of other important requirements of the position, all is moot if the principal is unable to communicate well, and thus connect well, with the school's various constituencies.

If the job is being done well, one might ask, shouldn't that speak for itself? Well, yes and no. For certain, when a principal is taking care of business (i.e., is clearly focused on student achievement and welfare and performs the job with care, commitment, and competency), the proof will no doubt be evident in a number of dimensions. However, folks' perception of how well a school is running and how well a principal is leading can be a tricky thing, even within the school. The external stakeholders—parents and people in the community—are often privy to distorted or incomplete versions of what is happening in a school and thus frequently make erroneous or premature judgments about the school, its teachers, its administration—or all three—based on such flawed information. Doing the right things and doing them right simply isn't enough for principals to be successful if these right things do not include the vital role of communicating well with people and involving them appropriately. Connecting both internally and externally to all stakeholders requires the establishment of multifaceted communication loops for keeping people well-informed and updated on what's happening in the school and, in turn, for getting vital feedback and input as well. Open, multidirectional channels of communication are essential to a healthy school culture.

Covey (1992) refers to such channels—or conduits—as "stakeholder information systems," which he explains are ways to

> put teeth into a mission statement, turning it into a constitution, the supreme law of the land, because you are gathering data on it, looking at it regularly, problem-solving and action planning around it, and rewarding people on the basis of it. (p. 235)

Effective leadership requires ensuring people's input in the school's operation from defining its mission and goals to supporting their attainment. An ongoing responsibility of leaders is to provide the various stakeholders (internal and external) with systematic ways of giving input and feedback to the school and with conduits for getting accurate, reliable information from the principal and staff. Leaders too frequently fail to realize how important it is to lay the groundwork, the communication conduits, essential for this multifaceted exchange of information to occur. Such

access is vital if people are to understand the principal's and staff's motives for taking certain actions, for leaders to understand what others are thinking and get critical input in making decisions and shaping the school culture to ensure a good fit with the community, and for involving key stakeholders in appropriate ways in the operation and decision-making processes that pave the way—with least resistance—for improvement and necessary change in the school. Such a multidirectional flow of communication is essential to the health of the organization. Without it, an organization—much like the human body—will fall to entropy.

This chapter deals with issues and strategies related to communication—those related to the principals themselves and those related to their role in facilitating communication among the organization's stakeholders. Three essential aspects of the principal's role as instructional leader and chief expeditor of the flow of information (internally and externally) are (1) seeking first to understand, (2) facilitating collaboration within the school, and (3) connecting with parents and community as partners.

SEEKING FIRST TO UNDERSTAND

Leadership style itself is very much determined by communication style, which consists of a unique blend of how a person listens, speaks, writes, and uses body language. Although there are fundamental skills involved in communication, each of us has our unique approach to it, which forms the essence of our personality. Because of our wonderful uniqueness and individuality as human beings, there is no one best way to be a good communicator, any more than there is one best leadership style. Each of us must come to know ourselves well enough to identify our communication strengths and weaknesses, and how we as individuals can use our unique set of communication skills to enhance our personal power, to interact best with others in our own special environments.

As with all of this book's interrelated tools for leaders, no single recipe or how-to-communicate-best formula exists that can ignore the fundamental leadership issues of self-awareness and understanding dealt with in the first couple of chapters in this book. Who we are as people, our genuineness of purpose as school

leaders, the moral compass formed by this purpose, and the related core values each of us as leaders should identify and stand up for lay the foundation for any other leadership strategy or skill including this chapter's focus—being an effective communicator. No communication skill nor strategy will compensate for internal hollowness that results from shallow thinking and insufficient investments in self-awareness and reflection. Assuming these fundamental nuts and bolts are in tact, however, there are external strategies that can then be used as tools to hone a school leader's communication effectiveness—to ensure that the leader is well connected to his or her audiences and has established mechanisms for multidimensional flows of information that are necessary for the health of an organization.

In their description of the communication roles of the principal, Snowden and Gorton (1998) include not only the dissemination or sender role but also the principal as receiver, monitor, and seeker of communication. Too often, the communication responsibilities of the principal are interpreted too narrowly as primarily one of disseminator of information; in reality, that is only one of a principal's many communication roles, most of which hinge on understanding what others are saying and feeling. "Perhaps the most powerful principle," asserts Stephen Covey (1992), "of all human interaction is genuinely seeking to understand another deeply before being understood in return" (p. 272).

Studies have repeatedly shown that the communication skill most often needed by administrators is listening. "Much of the communication that administrators receive is oral; therefore, empathetic, accurate listening is necessary for a valid understanding of what is being communicated" (Snowden & Gorton, 1998, p. 39). In the communication role of receiver, hearing is distinguished from listening: Actively listening to others involves understanding what they are saying as well as attempting to understand what they are feeling and, furthermore, genuinely caring about those feelings. Covey (1992) calls this kind of listening empathic listening—listening carefully to what a person is saying while simultaneously trying to understand what the person is thinking and feeling:

> Giving full attention, being completely present, striving to transcend one's autobiography, and seeking to see things

> from another's point of view takes courage, patience, and inner sources of security. It means moving into the minds and hearts of others to see the world as they see it. . . . [I]t means that you understand how they feel based on how they see the world. That is empathy. (p. 116)

Oftentimes, accurately assessing what a person is feeling is more crucial to understanding that person than listening to what he or she is saying. The tone, pitch, and pace of the voice, the facial expressions and body language, are all excellent indicators of what a person is really feeling.

Like Covey and many others, Snowden and Gorton (1998) assert that good listeners are made, not born, and that effective listening must be developed and cultivated. "In part," these authors espouse, "it [effective listening] involves an attitude that indicates the administrator is interested in and cares about what the other party has to communicate. It is an attitude that cannot be easily fabricated without self-betrayal, and to be effective, it must be sincerely felt and communicated nonverbally, as well as verbally" (p. 39). Covey (1992) describes what he calls empathic listening.

As discussed in the preceding chapter on the importance of assessing school culture, listening and observing, making a deliberate effort to take in all the sounds and sights around you, are important processes in preparing a new principal for being an effective leader, in learning "how things are around here" before launching major change initiatives. These skills also serve the veteran leader well for staying informed and remaining mindful of what is being communicated by the school's routine sights and sounds. Daresh (2001) admonishes:

> Listen carefully to the words that teachers use to describe the students. Are they filled with warmth and support? Or do they express a constant battle between "us" and "them"? Do the war stories shared in the teachers' lounge reflect instances of adults controlling kids ("You should have seen how I got those kids to shape up last period!"), or are the stories shared about successes in achieving positive results ("My third period English class was really great this morning. You should have seen the presentations they made!")? (p. 86)

The sounds emanating from the classrooms are important indicators of the kinds of learning activities (active or passive) going on and the interaction quality among students and teachers. The tone of the language used by the staff, classified and professional employees, when interacting among themselves or with those outside the school sends distinct messages that can typecast the school (e.g., friendly and inviting, disorganized and confusing, cold and indifferent). Taking objective stock of these visual and auditory clues should be a routine part of a leader's day and can be key tools for gathering useful information.

As monitor, a principal must do more than simply remain open to what others have to say and listen empathically. Monitoring the quality of communication in the school is sometimes a skill referred to as with-it-ness—that is, being open and receptive to what is being said and the messages sent by the behaviors of people. In addition to such openness, with-it-ness requires taking deliberate action to stay informed about what is being said to whom, by whom, when, where, and in what manner. Effective principals are always routinely reaching out for such information in their efforts to understand.

Principal as seeker of information implies even more assertive action than monitoring and with-it-ness requires. In addition to information the principal can acquire by being vigilant and a good listener, he or she must strategically set in motion mechanisms for gathering information that otherwise would elude him or her. No leader can single-handedly cover all the bases in ferreting out what is being communicated—and how well—among the many stakeholders in a school.

One means of facilitating a principal's search for information is to identify what Snowden and Gorton (1998) call key communicators in the school and community, establish open lines of communication with them, and regularly interact with them. These key communicators are people the principal identifies (by being "with-it") who have more direct, frequent interaction with varied stakeholders and are ready-made conduits of information about the school and community: usually secretaries, parent leaders, community leaders, student leaders, and teacher and staff leaders. Key communicators—either because of their positional or their personal power—are major players in the communication networks of the school or community, or both. Their positions

may be the source of their power, or it may come from less-formal, more personal leadership qualities. Whatever their source of legitimacy as key communicators, they are important people for a principal to get to know, to observe, and to recognize as valuable conduits of information—facilitators of messages being sent to others from the principal and as reliable sources of information, feedback, and perspectives of those school stakeholders who may not be directly accessible to the principal.

The role of communicator in school leadership is multifaceted, for certain, and highly dependent on the leader's attitude. Viewing communication as a people process, rather than a language skill, may help you focus on the importance of understanding others as a prerequisite to being understood. Principals must be receptive communicators first—seekers of understanding—by developing and routinely using well-developed communication skills of active listening, observing, and learning from others as a major part of their role if they are to be effective leaders and set a healthy tone for the entire school.

FACILITATING COLLABORATION WITHIN THE SCHOOL

A climate of trust and mutual respect in a school is both essential to and simultaneously facilitated by a spirit of collaboration among faculty, staff, and administration. Site-based management, shared decision making, integrative leadership, teacher empowerment, and schools as communities of learners are a few of the many concepts that have emerged in the last decade amid a flurry of failed attempts (primarily legislated, mandated reform initiatives) to improve the public schools in this nation since the early 1980s. The common thread among many of these more recent concepts has been redirecting reform efforts away from the failed top-down approaches to a bottom-up, grassroots orientation. This redirection of reform efforts requires a new form of leadership as well. No longer does an autocratic style of leadership meet the needs of schools and the urgency for their reconstruction. Thus was born—from the mother of necessity—an acknowledgment of the need for more integrative leadership styles that hinge on the school's stakeholders participating as members of a school team.

In this bottom-up orientation to leadership, the principal's role shifts dramatically from autocrat and chief to mobilizer of teams and facilitator of collaboration mechanisms among the school's wide range of stakeholders.

The complexity of schools as organizations today can ill afford an autocratic, top-down, one-directional orientation to leadership and communication. In their research on leadership and school culture, Sashkin and Walberg (1993) describe the need for change in the organizational communication networking that has historically existed in schools in this country:

> There is no question that in the 1990s, U. S. schools face a changing and turbulent environment, and will have to cope with nonroutine problems on a daily basis. Modern organization theory stresses that if an organization is to be successful within this environment, it must have multiway communication networks and a high degree of flexibility in the conduct of its work. Communication structures in the organization must be established to meet the challenges of the environment and the purposes of the organization. Schools are clearly in a changing environment, and their current stated purpose is to educate all students to a high level of academic attainment. (pp. 127-128)

How does a principal facilitate internal communication? What structures are needed to facilitate not only two-way, but a truly dynamic flow of communication in schools that connects people in ways that have heretofore been largely missing? And what types of communication structures are most likely to improve teaching and learning? As with any other dimension of a school's operation, the unique context of any school with its own set of strengths and weaknesses will need to be considered in deciding how best to facilitate multidirectional communication and collaboration in a school. It comes as no surprise that researchers frequently report that effective instructional leadership does not exist outside or separate from effective organizational leadership. It is only one component of leadership in general, all areas of which are interconnected. Any leadership strategy that enhances the opportunity for interaction, involvement, and sense of ownership shared by the many players in a

school community is likely to impact positively the school's quality of instruction and, thus, students' achievement.

Principal's Behaviors for Facilitating Collaboration

Effective instructional leaders establish an open-door policy and an open demeanor—one in which teachers, parents, students, and staff are comfortable with approaching the principal in the school or in his or her office without always having to have an appointment or feeling apologetic about the interruption. Elaine McEwan (2001) puts it this way: "Only salespersons need appointments with instructional leaders" (p. 69). The principal closes his or her door only for confidential conferences. Otherwise, the door should remain open, and the principal should be accessible and approachable.

In addition to being accessible while in the office, the principal's frequent visibility in the halls, on the campus, in the cafeteria (frequently having lunch with students and teachers), and in the classrooms can be a powerful communication channel, as both a means for gathering input as well as for disseminating information and reinforcing the focus on the school's vision and goals, and the importance of teaching and learning. Where and how principals choose to spend their time sends a much louder message about what they stand for and where their priorities lie than what they may say or write.

School leaders' participation in social events outside the school also opens up lines of communication and offers an opportunity for getting acquainted with staff and community outside of the school setting. Deciding to what extent such participation is possible is important and will depend on your own set of personal circumstances. However, it is important that the principal actively participate in the social life of the school and community.

Learning to use effectively and availing oneself appropriately of the many in-house communication media—in-house televised broadcasts, intercom, Internet, memoranda, newsletters, faculty meetings, school assemblies, student councils—to connect with students and staff give the principal multiple ways to disseminate and receive information more accurately and to reinforce the school's mission with its central purpose of teaching and

learning. Multiple media are vital for communication in larger schools, where direct contact—by far the most desirable—is more difficult across the entire school. The key is not to abuse by overuse or neglect any of the many channels of communication but to learn to match the communication purpose with the most appropriate medium for either sending or receiving information. Surveys, telephone calls, personal visits, letters, and e-mail notes are all appropriate, additional ways to communicate, depending on the purpose and the situation. Being sensitive to the context and the purpose is essential to effective communication.

Facilitating Teacher Collaboration

An informal communication network always operates with or without anyone's sanctions in an organization—the proverbial grapevine. However, it may be more hindrance than help, depending on the professional status of the school culture, how the grapevine operates, and who the key communicators are within it. In any case, more reliable, professionally focused structures of collaboration should also be operative in schools to ensure the best forms of internal communication. The establishment of formal mechanisms for collaboration between teachers is vital to effective teaching and learning and fundamental to participatory, integrative leadership. Historically, teachers have had very little time or encouragement to engage in professional dialogue about the difficult, complex task of teaching. Sashkin and Walberg (1993) state:

> From a historical perspective, the isolated nature of the teaching profession has carried forward [from the days of the one-room schoolhouse] into contemporary schools. Teachers are now assigned their classroom with students typically at one age level, although they are more likely than not to group them by ability level within the classroom. Although cooperation between principals and teachers has been a rare event, so has cooperation among teachers. It has not been uncommon for us to enter a school building in April of any given school year and find that a teacher knows little or nothing about how another teacher at the same grade level conducts her

> classroom. Further, it is commonly reported experience that conversations in teachers' lounges rarely focus on instructional issues. (pp. 125-126)

What these researchers recommend is the establishment of communication structures that coordinate as well as regulate; maintain feelings of personal worth, interpersonal relationships, and organizational values; and focus on new ideas and new ways of doing things (Sashkin & Walberg, 1993, p. 126). They suggest the formation of teams of teachers who work to solve problems, are connected by liaisons, and are reformulated as new problems arise and goals change.

Recommendations for the creation of working teacher teams are often found in current professional literature. Such groups are given a variety of labels—work-study groups, dialogue teams, professional focus teams, quality circles, leadership committees, problem-solving teams, planning groups—but the objective is often the same: to provide time and focus for professional dialogue to problem solve and improve the school and the quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms. Tanck (1994) suggests using many forms of active teacher collaboration, such as

- Instruction councils as the locus of faculty leadership for ensuring competent professional practice and student performance
- A site-based school improvement project that involves the entire faculty (e.g., an excellent model for school improvement is Onward to Excellence developed at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory)
- Collegial development teams for teachers to share their expertise and provide mutual support for reaching professional goals in small groups of four to six
- Peer coaching, wherein teachers observe each other and provide feedback on the efficacy of instruction

> Participants in collegial development teams report a strong commitment to the process and agree that their efforts improve instruction and student achievement. . . . While there is evidence that site-based management per se does not improve student achievement in schools, there is evidence

> that a collaborative focus on effective school practice does enhance student learning. (Tanck, 1994, pp. 94-95)

In a recent article in *Phi Delta Kappan*, Mary Neuman and Warren Simmons (2000), directors of the Leadership Development initiative of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, espouse the benefits of distributed leadership for student learning:

> One effective way to create a common culture that values continuous learning for everyone is to create professional learning communities—small groups of practitioners who work together to foster reflective practice, collegiality, and collaboration and who develop and focus on a coherent set of standards-driven goals connected to teaching and learning. For example, a team in a school or district community can develop or adopt a process for giving and receiving feedback through peer observation, examining student work, and shoring teachers' and principals' work. By "de-privatizing" practice and sharing their work with one another, members of a school/district community can come to common understandings about the purpose of schooling, the curriculum, and best practices. (p. 11)

Effective instructional leaders help to make professionally focused talk the superglue of the school and its culture, and an expectation among the faculty, staff, and students—part of the school's norms. The principal and other teacher leaders must be role models, responsible for reinforcing professional dialogue and setting in motion the creation of such opportunities for others, for providing the resources and time teachers need to engage in such discussions, for helping to keep the discussions centered on improving instruction, and for being active participants in the discussion groups.

At the elementary level, too often the only collaborative team structure is seen in the form of grade-level teams. At the high school level, the most systematic collaborative teamwork is found among members of a department, usually formed around subject areas. Middle school team structures for teacher collaboration often follow either the elementary or the high school structure, depending on their predominant orientation. Although such

unilateral forms of collaboration may work well for grade-level or departmental coordination, they fall far short of providing other important kinds of cross-grade-level and whole school interaction that tap teachers' problem-solving capacity and foster their spirit as a united, schoolwide team of professionals working toward larger goals than those within grade levels or departments.

True participatory leaders identify early the leadership talent among their faculty and capitalize on this readily accessed leadership resource. One way to operationalize shared leadership is through the formation of a schoolwide leadership team that ideally is representative of the various grade levels and disciplines. The members of such a team can be valuable partners in shared school leadership and reliable communication conduits for helping to disseminate valid information and to gather input and feedback critical to good schoolwide decision making and continuous improvement efforts.

Another strategy for ensuring the best possible teaching and learning is establishing formal, team-based induction programs for new teachers and experienced teachers new to the school. The collaborative, team approach to induction of new teachers, with the mentor being only one part of a larger team, helps to distribute the responsibility among the faculty, increases the sense of professionalism and ownership among the faculty for the well-being of the new teacher, and provides a stronger base of support for new faculty. Obviously, the sooner new teachers are made to feel a part of the school family by becoming familiar with the people and the resources, becoming oriented to the culture, and being given the support and guidance they need to deal with their 1st-year problems and thus feel adequate in the classroom, everyone benefits—the new teacher, other faculty, the principal, and the community in addition to the students. Strong orientation systems for new staff can greatly enhance a principal's efforts to reshape and change the school's culture by ensuring that new staff get the positive support and assistance they need to be successful and feel competent.

Good induction programs help to expedite new teachers' effectiveness and confidence in the classroom, thereby enhancing the possibility that they will remain in the profession. The mass exodus of classroom teachers in this country due to retirement combined with the increasing demands on teachers and the high rate

of attrition of new teachers makes it imperative that proper care be given to the incoming new generation of teachers. It's not only good business, and it's more than facilitating better instruction; it is the moral, decent thing to do. New teachers today more than ever before need the kind of support afforded entry level persons in other professions—a period of mediated entry into the classroom, with strong support and nurturing, to ensure their competency before they are treated as full-fledged, veteran teachers.

A word of caution regarding collaborative structures: The interdependent connection between collaboration and school culture is especially critical to the success of various forms of principal-imposed structures for teacher collaboration. If the initiatives employed by the leader to increase the professionalism and collegiality among teachers is what Sergiovanni calls contrived collegiality, the results are likely to backfire. "Contrived collegiality, by forcing people together," Sergiovanni (1992) warns, "can take a toll on teachers' time and compromise their professional autonomy" (p. 90). He speculates on the historical cause for much of the lack of professionalism among faculties and in school cultures:

> The problem seems to result partly from a culture of schooling whose management is captured by bureaucratic norms and whose teachers are captured by the norms of isolation and privatism. These norms seem impervious to change strategies and leadership practices that rely on bureaucratic, psychological, and technical-rational authority. For example, administrators who push for collegiality by altering structures and introducing such innovations as team teaching and peer coaching in a school, without addressing the norm structure, may be superimposing a form of collegiality on an unaccepting culture. (p. 89)

In other words, true integrative, participatory leadership recognized by the school and community is a prerequisite for professional attitudes and behaviors to emerge from teachers and for these to become a part of the school culture. Without a principal's sincerity of purpose to share leadership and empower others, no strategy or superimposed mechanism for increasing the cooperation and collaboration among teachers will work to achieve

significant, positive school improvement. Teachers themselves must ult mately assume professional behaviors that will necessarily include collaboration for improvement. The principal merely paves the way for such collaboration, first by genuinely having and exhibiting the expectation that teachers are professionals with much to contribute to the leadership of the school. With such an expectation borne out by behaviors, the principal can then—and only then—facilitate teachers' collegiality by increasing opportunities and professional pu·poses for them to engage in collaborative endeavors.

Facilitating Student Collaboration

Students must be actively included in the information loop if the school is to operate most effectively. The structures most appropriate for soliciting their input and involving them in meaningful ways in the operation of the school are contextually dependent. That is, the degree and kind of participation will depend on students' ages, sophistication, and experiences with purposeful collaboration among themselves as well as with the adults in the environment. Unfortunately, students' views about their educational experiences and the operation of their school are too often overlooked.

The most obvious, prolific communication conduit with students is in the day-to-day interaction with them in the halls, on the campus, in the cafeteria, on the playground, on the athletic field, and in the classrooms. The tone and type of messages sent and received during these myriad less-formal interactions between adults and students and among the students themselves are indeed a vital means of communicating with students. The culture of the school is most impacted by the degree of respect, the expectations for achievement and behavior, and the individual attention shown throughout the school day among the school's myriad of interpersonal interactions. However, in addition to the input teachers and principals get and the messages they send (by word, deed, and body language) to students in their informal interactions with them, more deliberate, formal strategies can also be useful in opening and maintaining lines of communication with students. Students' inclusion in the information web of the school community is essential for them to acquire a high degree of identification with the school, a strong sense of community and

team spirit, and a feeling of ownership that comes only from involvement in an organization's operation.

One oldie-but-goodie means of communicating with students more formally is through the establishment of a student council or student advisory committee. Most students are quite capable of participating in such a capacity by middle grades. To be a valuable communication channel, however, the council should participate in the school's operation in meaningful ways. When students are given opportunities to participate in purposeful projects and school problem solving, everyone benefits. Adults are frequently surprised and delighted by the quality and number of ideas students generate. And students gain experience with group problem solving, are better informed about the school's mission and purpose, feel more connected to the adults and each other as a part of a community, and feel valued and respected as contributing members of the organization of school. These are powerful culture builders as well as communication conduits.

An easy, simple device to facilitate communication with and among students (and others) is to have a suggestion box for students to deposit their ideas for school improvement. Awarding students for the "best idea of the week" or month will add interest and spark enthusiasm for participation in this strategy. Having a group of teachers and students judge the suggestions and pick the winners could add more interest and broaden participation in the activity. This idea will have positive results only if students' suggestions are given serious consideration and follow-up.

Student work-study teams can be formed on an ad hoc basis as needs arise with which students could assist—improving the cleanliness of the building and grounds, improving student conduct, participating in community service activities, or planning for special events, such as Grandparents Day. Students could also serve on the adult work-study teams as needs arise that are appropriate to their participation. Work-study teams may often involve the participation of teachers, students, administrators, and parents in cooperative endeavors.

Peer tutors and support groups can be an effective way to use the talent and skill of many students, get them involved in helping each other, and tap into the varied interests and needs of the student population. Such groups can involve teachers and community members as well as students, depending on the strengths and resources of the school community.

It is important to be certain that varied communication channels are operative and open for all students, not just a select group. Ideally, each student should have opportunities to be an active, contributing member of the school community. When only the academically gifted students or children from the top socioeconomic echelons are asked to participate in student leadership and are the primary students included in the organization's communication loop, the other students eventually get the message that not much is expected of them and that what they have to offer is not as valuable as those students in the loop. It naturally follows that when students feel marginalized or less than good about their participation in school, they find subgroups with which to identify and find personal value and esteem.

CONNECTING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY AS PARTNERS

"Nothing motivates a child more," Michael Fullan (1994) points out in his book about the principalship, "than when learning is valued by school, family, and community working in partnership" (p. 22). In making a case for the importance of establishing partnerships with parents in the education of children, Dolan (1994) offers these powerful ideas:

> To educate children without a deep partnership of teacher and parent is hopeless, and going in we have conditioned everyone to minimal interaction, indifference, maybe even suspicion. This is the (Steady State) in most of the country. And, it has to change. . . . In a school, where mistrust between the community and the administration is the major issue, you might begin to deal with it by making sure that parents were present at every major event, every meeting, every challenge. Within the discomfort of that presence, the learning and the healing could begin. (p. 159)

Forming Partnerships

Parents and community as collaborating partners with schools is simply a must for schools to be effective in their central

mission of caring for and educating children. The job is far too complex for educators to be successful attempting to do it alone. Healthy partnerships require strong systems of two-way communication between the school and parents and community. The school must be able to send messages in a reliable, efficient manner and likewise be able to receive feedback and input from parents and community. The strategies discussed in this section are some of the more reliable tools principals can use in establishing open lines of communication and strong alliances with their parent and community partners, an important part of today's school principalship.

School councils or advisory committees that include representative stakeholders are an important part of today's school operations. Rather than seeing such groups as necessary annoyances or window dressings, today's most progressive school leaders incorporate them as "part of a systemic shift in the relationship between the communities and schools that is both inevitable and that contains the seeds of a necessary realignment with the family and other social agencies" (Fullan, 1994, p. 22). Ideally councils work on problems and help the school garner the resources needed to make change happen, rather than make major decisions. It is the principal's job, however, to explain the parameters and purposes for their functioning and to help them learn to work cooperatively as a group, brainstorm ideas to improve the school, and coalesce for the benefit of children. They are not to be viewed as panaceas or the sole means of involving parents and community members as partners of the school.

An important new role for principals today is serving as the middleman—facilitating the participation of parents and community members and ensuring that such councils understand their advisory capacity and serve useful purposes. Councils should generally not get so heavily entangled in trying to make decisions that their energy and morale are drained off in petty power struggles. Fullan (1994) writes of both the potential benefits as well as the limitations of such councils, which should be clearly understood by the school leader if such groups are to benefit the school's operation:

> The role of the council is to help mobilize the forces and resources for change by developing the skills of parents, teachers,

> students, and principals as leaders in "group problem-solving," "dealing with conflict," and "making content expertise accessible." . . . The establishment of a council involving a handful of parents could not possibly improve the learning for the hundreds of students in the school. What does make a difference is the multiple forms of particular involvement deliberately fostered, developed and supported. (pp. 22-24)

Facilitating Mutual Understanding

Surveys can be an effective way of gathering information needed by today's principal in analyzing and understanding the community. The newspaper, the Internet, mail, personal interviews, or telephone, are all viable vehicles for surveying parents and community members. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages, which should be considered in choosing the method most appropriate for each school context. Surveys can be used to glean attitudes and opinions related to issues about which parents and community have an interest or concern. Finding out how the community at large feels about issues that are usually of concern to them—discipline, drugs, violence, school grounds and facilities—are easily accessed via surveys. Parents' concerns are usually more closely linked to issues involving teaching and learning. Including parents and citizens in the development of the questions usually enhances both the quality and receptivity of the survey. Resources abound for assisting with the development of a survey. One such helpful resource is the book titled *The School and Community* (1996) by Gallagher, Bagin, and Kindred, included in this chapter's references. Carefully developing the survey or questionnaire and piloting it for feedback and revision before using it wide scale (or selecting one already developed that serves your purposes) can prevent many mistakes and ensure that the survey best serves its purposes.

Dissemination strategies to get the word out or to keep parents and community regularly informed include letters or newsletters from the principal, the teachers, or both; a school newspaper; a local newspaper column; and local radio and television spots. Additional communication conduits linking schools to parents and community in two-way exchanges of information are limited only by the imagination and resourcefulness of the school's

leadership and include homework hotlines, back-to-school open houses, regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences, and PTO or PTA meetings. The point is not to seek one perfect channel of communication with the public but to have a system consisting of multiple conduits or channels to facilitate dynamic, multidirectional flows of communication and opportunities for community-based interaction and dialogue about the school and the students.

With the many stakeholders in today's schools representing such diverse interests and perspectives, such interaction with parents and community as partners in the education of children is absolutely essential to the school's effectiveness in fulfilling its central mission—teaching and learning. Stephen Covey (1992) saliently warns, however, of the shallowness of strategies that defy or ignore the importance of trust and sincerity emanating from the leadership in the organization:

> Until we cultivate principle-centered leadership inside our organizations, our efforts to improve communications will have little permanent value. The foundation lies with people and relationships. When we ignore the foundation, our improvement initiatives will fail or falter. Effective communication is built on the cement of trust. And trust is based on trustworthiness, not politics. (p. 118)

Nor will any of these recommended strategies work without principals accepting "seeking first to understand" and "serving the child's best interest" as their working mantras.

And so it is, at the end of this chapter on communication's role in instructional leadership, we come full circle once again to dealing with the core of who our leaders are as people. Marlin Tanck (1994) writes:

> The nature of moral leadership is portrayed to the staff and the public by the way in which things typically are done and how resources usually are used. Provision of higher-level moral leadership, which stresses professional ethics and service to students, is strongly stated by allocating adequate time for professional collaboration and by making instruction councils the focus of school organization. (pp. 91-92)

What motivates a principal most in coming to work each day and whose interest does he or she most passionately serve? Only when the interests of children propel the strategies and actions of school leaders and they assume with understanding and skill their new role as team builders and chief agents of coalescence of multiple resources on behalf of children are their efforts more than sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, making much noise but signifying very little for improving schools, teaching, or learning.

POINTERS FOR THE PRINCIPAL

→ Seek first to understand.

- ➢ Assess your communication skills—your strengths and deficiencies.
- ➢ Practice empathic listening to genuinely understand how people feel and what they are trying to tell you.
- ➢ Improve your attitude toward people to improve your listening skill.
- ➢ Monitor the quality of communication throughout the school.
- ➢ Actively seek feedback and input from others.
- ➢ Listen more; tell less.

→ Facilitate opportunities for collaboration within the school.

- ➢ Encourage a climate of trust and respect.
- ➢ Be genuinely approachable and highly visible.
- ➢ Establish multiple forms of teacher/parent/student teams that collaborate regularly to improve teaching and learning.
- ➢ Institute a school-based, team approach to induction of new teachers.
- ➢ Avoid trying to paste on collegiality without doing the hard work of changing the culture.

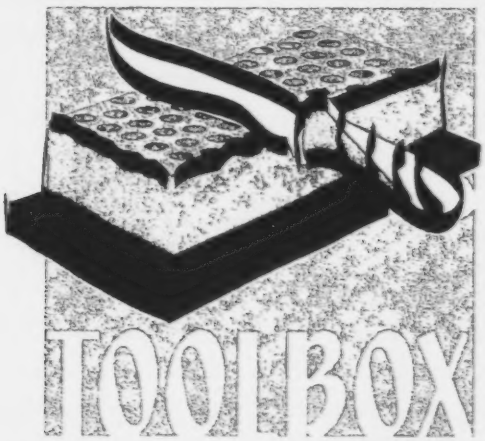
→ Treat parents and community as true partners in educating children.

- ➢ Assertively reach out to all parents on behalf of students.
- ➢ Establish multiple, two-way lines of communication with parents and community.
- ➢ Capitalize on the potential benefits of a leadership advisory council consisting of parent and community representatives.
- ➢ Use media and technology to expedite and improve communication.

CHAPTER SIX

A Learning Organization's Whetstones

Best Leadership Practices for Facilitating Professional Growth and Development



The hallmark of the artisan is the ability to reflect on practice.

—Thomas J. Sergiovanni (1995, p. 34).

Effective instructional leaders are eager learners.

—Elaine McEwan (2001, p. 36).

A combination of meaningful collaborative involvement and self-directed performance and accountability is what makes a profession strong and keeps competent persons in it.

—Marlin L. Tanck (1994, p. 94).

A school system truly committed to empowering teachers by giving them access to decision making must be prepared to foster a new professional culture in the schools, a culture that accords high priority to matters of the mind.

—Gene I. Maeroff (1994, p. 55).

We cannot achieve quality learning for all, or nearly all, students until quality development is attained and sustained for all teachers.

—Michael Fullan (1994, p. 246).

Meaningful and lasting change occurs when we look inside ourselves for answers.

—Carl R. Rogers and H. Jerome Freiberg (1994, p. 119).

Too many schools are so paralyzed by what teacher evaluation used to be that they resist promising new alternatives.

—Edward F. Iwanicki (2001, p. 59).

- ❑ Reflective Practice
- ❑ Supportive Supervision
- ❑ Cooperative Evaluation
- ❑ Collaborative Professional Development

Research repeatedly indicates that the majority of a typical principal's day is spent on disciplining students, communicating with the central office staff, talking to parents, and dealing with myriad administrivia (management and operational tasks). "I believe," writes Gordon Cawelti (1993), Executive Director Emeritus of the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, "the building principals who would be called instructional leaders would spend at least half or more of their time engaged in the following activities: (1) curriculum planning, (2) clinical supervision, (3) staff development, and (4) teacher evaluation" (p. ix). He further postulates that these tasks are often deliberately avoided "simply because principals are not comfortable with them."

Today's school leader does not have to be the dominant expert in all of these complex areas, but he or she must recognize these school processes as the whetstones of an improving organization. The principal must be chief mobilizer of the school's talent and resources to maximize these processes as tools for organizational development. Thus, the case is further made for a participatory style of leadership for today's schools. A principal's role as a member of a school-based leadership team is primarily one of mobilizing, encouraging, and facilitating working teams. The principal is not expected to do it all. Rather, as a leader of leaders, the principal is expected to be involved in the work of curriculum planning, supervision, staff development, and evaluation, but as a working team member, not always the man or woman in charge.

Along with the teachers, instructional leader-principals give these processes a considerable amount of time; lend their expertise where they have some and when they find it appropriate to share; take care to maintain high visibility and working, team-member participation; and facilitate two-way communication channels with the school's working teams as well as multiway communication channels between and among the various working teams themselves. The processes that support the continuing development of the organization and its people are complex and best handled by administrators and teachers working together in a collaborative fashion to share their skills, knowledge, and experience. The job is too big for an administrator to manage well alone, but, more important, the collaborative processes themselves—as discussed in Chapter 5—hold the greatest potential for transforming

the school into a learning community focused on improving teaching and learning. According to Hawley and Valli (2000),

> The essential characteristic of effective professional development is that it involves continuous teacher and administrator learning in the context of collaborative problem-solving. Thus it occurs in planned, structured ways and in ways that are incidental and informal. When professional development is seen as a program or series of formal scheduled events or is otherwise disconnected from authentic problem solving, it is unlikely to have much influence on teacher or student learning. (p. 9)

Reflective practice, supportive supervision, cooperative team-based evaluation, and work-study groups are forms of authentic school processes (as opposed to event-oriented staff development that occurs on occasion rather than routinely) that can be powerful tools for sharpening staff's, teachers', and administrators' skills and performance. In healthy, developing schools, professional development in the form of reflective practice, supportive supervision, cooperative evaluation, and work-study groups are routine practices in the day-to-day operation of administration, faculty, and staff; they are embedded in the school's culture, rather than artificially injected or superimposed as an event, such as a workshop or inservice experience scheduled intermittently.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Someone once estimated that teachers rank second only to air-traffic controllers in the number of decisions they must make during their typical workday. Teaching as well as school administration are physically, emotionally, and intellectually demanding work. Ironically, the busy-ness of most schools undermines their most central business—matters of the mind. Authors Genevieve Brown and Beverly Irby (1997) posit:

> Although it is difficult to find the time to step back and analyze decisions and subsequent actions, it is critical that the principal do so. . . . Reflection by the principal necessitates

> the engagement in thoughtful and careful reporting and analysis of past practices, events, and experiences, thus offering valuable insights into one's leadership progress. Reflection takes the principal from a basic level of acceptance of the way things are in the process of schooling to a level of critical examination, self-assessment, and new visions. (pp. 26-27)

These authors report the following commonalities among reflective administrators:

1. They view self-assessment and reflection as priorities for school improvement.
2. They recognize that external and internal challenges result in growth.
3. They intentionally engage in activities aimed at challenging current beliefs and practice expanding understandings.
4. They understand that change is inevitable.
5. They recognize that chaos often accompanies change.
6. They share understandings with colleagues. (pp. 27-29)

Brown and Irby's (2001) handbook on development of a principal's portfolio includes many suggestions for helping an administrator, new or veteran, to learn to use reflection as a tool for self-improvement as well as for facilitating reflective practice among teachers and students in the school community.

To be sure, schools have not traditionally been conducive to much reflection, especially among the adults. How is it that students are supposed to learn higher order thinking and practice in-depth reflection in a school context wherein adult behavior is primarily characterized by reactionary, spontaneous behaviors, such as "putting out fires" and "keeping the lid on?" In writing about this ambiguous phenomenon, Michael Fullan (1994) states, "Schools as learning organizations are basically non-intellectual in the sense that the way they are organized, structurally and normatively, is not amenable to experimentation, critical reflection, continuous learning, assessment, or rethinking"

(p. 243). Yet teachers themselves, both as individuals and collectively as faculty, should be routinely practicing these reflection-intensive processes. Members of professions are characterized by their recognition of the need to stay current and to be accountable for continuous improvement and adaptability to change. Sarason (1993) saliently advises preservice teachers of the importance of understanding and participating in change:

> Teaching is not and should not be for those unwilling or unable to be active agents of educational-institutional change. From the standpoint of the larger society, there is too much at stake to allow teachers to be passive participants in the dynamics and processes of change. (p. 19)

Being active participants in the dynamics and processes of change, as individuals and as members of a team and of an organization also involved in continuous change, necessitates reflective practice. It is highly complex, oftentimes ambiguous work because change processes are not neatly packaged events. Change not only is continuous but also is characterized by flux, unpredictability, and messiness.

In grappling with the kind of science that would best help educators to function in the chaotic world of schools as loosely coupled organizations, Sergiovanni (1995) suggests a "craftlike science, within which professional practice is characterized by interacting reflection and action and episodes" (p. 32). " Indeed," he continues, "professional knowledge is created in use as principals and teachers think, reflect, decide, and do" (p. 32). Sergiovanni describes what he calls scruffie thinking as serving a principal best in dealing with "complex problems in turbulent environments under indeterminate conditions." "Scruffies believe that because the principal, not the theoretician or the researcher, is in command of the idiosyncratic nature of the situation, she or he must be in control of the available scientific knowledge" (pp. 33-35). What is there, then, that exists in the world of professional know-how and administrative theory to enhance a principal's decision-making acuity and skill? Sergiovanni readily attests to the significance of the field's scientific research base but only when the contextual realities of each situation are given full consideration simultaneously:

> Professionals rely heavily on informed intuitions as they create knowledge in use. Intuition is informed by theoretical knowledge on the one hand and by interacting with the context of practice on the other. When teachers use informed intuition, they are engaging in reflective practice. When principals use informed intuition, they too are engaging in reflective practice. Knowing is in the action itself, and reflective professionals become students of their practice. They research the context and experiment with different courses of action. (p. 32)

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McRel) synthesized the most current literature pertaining to leadership and school improvement in a March, 2000, monograph that also offered suggestions to school leaders based on the review. Building a learning organization was one of the six enumerated guidelines offered in this article. Advice to principals regarding this guideline for becoming a more effective leader of change to improve teaching and learning is summarized in Box 6.1.

Of course, the extent to which these suggestions are helpful is largely dependent on the degree of trust that exists among members of the group and the larger school community. Which comes first here, the chicken (professional dialoguing and experimenting) or the egg (trust)? Without ever having the opportunity to deal with unsettling ideas and to examine belief systems together, school members are not likely to develop a culture of trust, which must exist for professional reflection and dialoguing to be its best.

The superglue chapter, Chapter 4, dealt in some detail with how leaders can help to create positive, learner-centered school cultures. Although such a culture built on trust takes time and many day-to-day interactions between the members of the school community to develop, it can be facilitated by leaders giving teachers safe opportunities to get to know each other well enough for trust to develop.

The practices recommended for instructional leadership in this chapter and throughout the text are based on the assumption that excellent teaching and learning cannot happen apart from a trusting community of learners, in which reflective practice and continuous learning are routine behaviors for everyone and are modeled best by teachers and administrators in a school. Lieberman (1995) states:

BOX 6.1

BUILDING A LEARNING ORGANIZATION

- Keep the organization dynamic and adaptable to change by creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge and modifying behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights.
- Use honest inquiry to examine the appropriateness of past practices or a charted path. Begin inquiries by evoking previous experiences, assumptions, values, and beliefs about issues at hand. Study groups, reflection groups, focus groups and storytelling groups are relevant options.
- Use every person and every situation as a resource for learning: outside consultants, workshops, print materials, conferences, as well as the expertise and experience of the internal faculty and staff working regularly in both whole and small groups to reflect on whether their instructional practices are working.
- Create a safe environment in which people are open to exploring and dialoguing about ideas and alternatives, many of which can be unsettling. Use balance as the leader between stimulating change and maintaining sufficient focus and stability to keep people moving positively.

> People learn best through active involvement and through thinking about and becoming articulate about what they have learned. Processes, practices, and policies built on this view of learning are at the heart of a more expanded view of teacher development that encourages teachers to involve themselves as learners—in much the same way they wish their students would. (p. 592)

Reflective practice—for principals and teachers—is essential to maximizing professional people's growth and development and, thus, to school improvement. As such, it is a recurring theme in

this toolbox for instructional leadership. The reader can readily detect the reflective nature of the recommendations in each of the chapters thus far in this book (i.e., the significance of examining personal style, skills, values, vision, and personal mission as individuals in Chapters 1 and 2; creating a collectively shared mission, vision, and goals as members of a school community in Chapter 3; developing and maintaining a school culture focused on improving teaching and learning in Chapter 4; and the importance of collaboration and multiway channels for teachers, parents, students, and administrators to interact, dialogue, and focus on school improvement in Chapter 5).

Supportive supervision and cooperative evaluation are this chapter's recommended approaches to these two basic functions of a school principalship. Sergiovanni (1991) contends that supervision and evaluation are inevitably intertwined processes:

> When the focus of supervision is on teaching and learning, evaluation is an unavoidable aspect of the process. . . . Attempts to mask evaluation aspects of supervision by avoiding the use of the term, by denying that evaluation occurs, or by declaring that evaluation is reserved only for the annual administrative review . . . are viewed suspiciously by teachers and for good reason—evaluation cannot be separated from supervision. (p. 282)

It is no coincidence that the particular leadership approach to each of these functions encouraged in this chapter is highly dependent on reflection and dialogue as instrumental to the successes of these recommended honing tools. These organizational whetstones (i.e., tools for renewing and improving schools as an ongoing process) are given substantial credence by their association with many of today's best thinkers and instructional leaders.

SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISION

As with any of the functions of leadership, principals should reflect on and answer basic questions about their beliefs and values regarding education in general and the supervisory function in particular to decide the appropriate action to take in fulfilling the role. The leader's educational platform (discussed in

BOX 6.2

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose or goal of supervision?
2. How can this goal best be achieved?
3. What can I do as principal to facilitate the achievement of this goal?

Chapter 1 of this book) serves as a starting point for determining how one should behave in any of the basic leadership functions. Having thoughtfully developed an educational platform regarding one's values and beliefs as a leader in education, a school principal is then prepared to respond to the three additional questions in Box 6.2 specifically focused on clarifying one's supervisory role and subsequent behavior.

In defining the purpose of supervision, today's most effective administrators are clearly moving away from a paradigm of "snoopervision" toward one of facilitator of teachers' and staff's growth and development (Beck, 1994; Blase & Blase, 1998; Daresh & Playko, 1995; Glatthorn, 1984; Oliva & Pawlas, 1997; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). When the purpose of supervision is perceived as a catalytic process to help people improve their performance, it becomes quite different from when supervision is perceived to be an autocratic, top-down exercise in quality control. Findings from the Blases' recent study (1998) regarding instructional leadership are representative of the conclusions drawn by many contemporary researchers who favor a more nurturing, facilitative approach to supervision:

> In essence, our findings confirm that good supervisory practice should no longer emphasize control and competition among teachers: The prevalent negative associations that derive from "control supervision" simply must give way to various forms of collegiality among educators. Supervision should avoid restrictive and intimidating approaches to teachers, as well as approaches that provoke little more than

> teachers "jumping through hoops" and giving "dog and pony shows" based on reductionist algorithms presumed to define good teaching in their classrooms. Instead, supervision should work toward the development of professional dialogue among educators. (p. 159)

Once the purpose of supervision has been determined, the second question is how can this purpose best be realized? The literature is replete with excellent models of supervision to assist a principal with different types of goals related to supervision focused on nurturing and facilitating better teaching. Supervision of this kind is supportive in its basic purpose; Daresh and Playko (1995) label it proactive supervision. Regardless of its term, effective instructional leadership for today's schools is geared toward instructional improvement. Following is an annotated sampling of the most common models/types of supervision found in the literature for school leadership to date:

1. *Developmental supervision.* Among the foremost thinkers and writers on educational supervision is Carl Glickman (1985). His supervisory model includes four approaches he labels (1) directive control, (2) directive informational, (3) collaborative, and (4) nondirective. This comprehensive model of supervision has a developmental dimension to it, progressing from being highly controlled by the supervisor (directive control) to being primarily teacher controlled (nondirective). The idea is for principals to be able to provide teachers with a wide range of developmentally appropriate supervision. However, the directive control approach has little support in much of the current literature about best practices for supervision in today's schools.

2. *Autosupervision.* This is the Blasés' term for teachers assuming primary responsibility for their instructional practices and professional development through self-analysis, reflectivity, monitoring one's own progress toward goals, and implementing changes based on reflection. Allan Glatthorn (1984) labels it self-directed development.

3. *Clinical supervision.* According to Goldhammer, Anderson, and Krajewski (1993), this form of supervision—among the most

widely accepted and attempted supervisory models in the field—is that aspect of supervision that draws on data from firsthand observation of actual teaching, or other professional events, and involves face-to-face and other associated interactions between the observer(s) and person(s) observed in the course of analyzing the observed professional behaviors and activities and seeking to define, or to develop (or both), the next steps toward improved performance (p. 34).

4. *Collegial supervision.* This is a form of peer supervision that Allan Glatthorn (1984) calls cooperative professional development. Glatthorn defines this approach to supervision as a moderately formalized process in which two or more teachers agree to work together for their own professional growth, usually by observing each other's classroom, giving each other feedback about the observation, and discussing shared professional concerns (p. 39). Sergiovanni (1995) refines this form of professional development into more of a supervisory process by stipulating the necessity of the team or pair of teachers to establish the rules and issues before an observation is made that will also extend to follow-up conversations or conferences.

5. *Differentiated supervision.* As the name implies, this eclectic approach to supervision draws on many of the existing models in an effort to meet best the varying needs of teachers by matching the type of supervision with the teacher's professional developmental stage and his or her style of teaching and of learning.

6. *Proactive supervision.* Daresh and Playko (1995) use this term to differentiate the more desirable practices of supervision for today from those stemming from the scientific management views of yesteryear. They describe this approach as one that must stem from an understanding of one's own basic attitudes, values, and assumptions about supervision and education. This approach to supervision is in harmony with participative leadership approaches.

The concept of supportive supervision is consistent with integrative, participatory leadership styles used by today's most effective principals. Although supervisory responsibilities can be assumed by a number of different people in the organization—from central office supervisors to supervising teachers—the role of principal is inherently linked to supervision. It is, as Daresh and Playko (1995)

maintain, a moot point to try and separate leadership from supervision: "We continue to hold firmly our view that more effective educational programs will result from more effective leadership practice; we also continue to believe that effective leadership and proactive supervision are synonymous terms" (p. xiii).

Most of the models of supervision can be used in a positive, supportive fashion if the intent of the process is to improve teaching. Because of its comprehensive nature, however, reliance on the differentiated model of supervision is recommended as one that most clearly illustrates and embraces the values of supportiveness and individuation—using whatever means a principal has to help a teacher improve. "Matching supervisory options to individual needs," states Sergiovanni (1995), " . . . has great potential for increasing the motivation and commitment of teachers at work" (p. 234). Although exact matches are unrealistic, considerations about what will work best with a teacher and his or her uniqueness should maximize supervision efforts. The more a principal knows about a teacher's abilities, intellect, learning style, teaching style, motivation and work goals, the more the chances increase for making a good supervisory match between the principal and the teacher.

This approach to supervision requires more than a nurturing spirit and thorough acquaintance with faculty as individuals, however. Differentiated, supportive supervision also requires a great deal of skill and flexibility by the principal, who must be open to facilitating a wide range of supervisory support to meet the highly variable needs of most faculties.

This point leads to consideration of the third question posed in the beginning of this section: What can I do as principal to facilitate the accomplishment of the goal? Once the purpose of supervision is defined as improving teaching and learning, and the preferred approach to achievement of this goal is determined to be a kind of supportive approach to supervision of teachers—both as a collective group and as individuals—then defining the principal's role in accomplishing this goal naturally follows and is essential to act on the first two steps.

Supportive supervision necessitates differentiation and sensitivity to the needs of the individual teacher, much as good teaching requires attention to the individual needs of students. Sergiovanni (1995) writes:

> The key to the contingency view and at the heart of reflective practice within the principalship is a very simple but deceptive axiom. Teachers have work goals that are important to them. Given the opportunity, they will work very hard at achieving these goals. . . . Supervisory options and styles should respond to these differences among teachers, for such responsiveness makes it easier for work goals to be realized. (p. 243)

The principal's role in providing a support system in which teachers can grow and further develop the complex skills of teaching is one of coordinator and integrator of many people to provide the best supervision in such a tailored fashion. The differentiated, supportive approach to supervision defies top-down, single-handed administrative styles. The principal's role in this ambitious, complex form of supervision is one of team member, motivator, resource gatherer, identifier of available talent, and scheduler. In other words, the principal provides oversight of the process and assumes much of the logistics for ensuring opportunities for differentiated supervision to occur, while involving teachers in assuming a major part of the responsibility for their own growth and development both as individuals and as a collective faculty.

A comprehensive, supportive, differentiated system of supervision in a school has a number of components operating simultaneously (i.e., ongoing processes, rather than unilateral events) to ensure continuous reflection, dialogue, analysis, and planning for improving teaching. Examples of activities that are illustrative of supportive supervision systems are in Box 6.3. Sergiovanni (1995) contends:

> Neither teacher development nor supervision are things that we can do for teachers, but are things that they must do for themselves. . . . The test of leadership is to be able to extend to teachers an invitation to accept responsibility for themselves, and to have them accept it. (p. 244)

But this is not likely to happen unless principals and school leaders provide a well-designed system of support and assistance in a professional context of high expectations for performance among the entire community.

BOX 6.3

FORMS OF SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISION

- *Cooperative clinical supervision.* Teacher and supervisor (or master teacher) work together to establish goals, plan observations, and perform follow-up conferences. Administrators and teachers should become skilled in observing, analyzing, and conferencing for improvement. These can be intimidating processes, but tackled head on by the whole faculty, they can become valuable tools for improving teaching and sharing the expertise among the staff. This form of supervision is intensive and reflective, and requires in-depth dialoguing to be maximized. Short-circuiting the complexity of the elements of good clinical supervision can reduce it to a robotic process—something that is more a liability than an asset.
- *Collegial coaching.* A master teacher teams with a novice or veteran teacher needing assistance with an identified pedagogical skill.
- *Collegial study groups.* Small groups of teachers (may also include administrators) work toward the accomplishment of a shared professional development goal.
- *Individualized, mediated entry programs.* Long-term, team-based, tailored support systems are established for new teachers (e.g., may include several years of close mentoring, nurturing, and support before the teacher is assigned a full load of students; team-based support available; plenty of coaching and opportunities to work with master teachers and administrators provided).
- *Self-directed development activities.* Teachers audio- or videotape themselves (or work with a colleague) for self-analysis and follow that by reflections in a journal or log leading to plans for improvement. Teachers may dialogue with colleague(s) and draw on feedback from students and parents to incorporate their own improvement plans. Professional reading and reflecting and attending professional conferences are also conducted.

Blase and Blase (1998) conclude from their study of effective instructional leaders that those principals who are most successful plan carefully for teachers to have adequate feedback, information, and assistance for their professional growth and development. Turning a school into a community of learners should begin with the adults in the environment setting high expectations and assuming primary responsibility for their own and each other's performance as professional educators. Principal leaders cannot force this to happen, but they can set the stage by modeling such behavior, providing opportunities for teachers to grow as professionals, and setting high expectations for themselves and everyone in the school community.

COOPERATIVE EVALUATION

Closely allied with, and perhaps even inseparably intertwined, with supervision is the leadership function of evaluation. Just as with other functions, principals equip themselves to deal best with the evaluation by returning to their educational platform, reviewing their fundamental values and beliefs, and adding to it questions that pertain to the purpose of, process for, and their role in the evaluation function that were posed in the previous section on supervision. "Two leadership tasks invariably affecting the instructional climate are supervision and evaluation of teachers," writes Lynn G. Beck (1994) in her book on administration as a caring profession. She continues:

> An ethic of care would influence administrators' understanding of purposes, processes, and roles in these activities. In recent years supervision and evaluation have been viewed as activities for monitoring teachers' work, judging their effectiveness based on student outcomes, and meting out rewards for "success" and punishments for "failures." Administrators guided by caring would reject these purposes, viewing them as patronizing, discouraging of teachers' professionalism, and ineffective in achieving desired results. Instead, they would consider supervision and evaluation as activities intended to promote personal and professional development and well-being. Viewing these as endeavors to support teaching

> and learning, caring instructional leaders would be considerate and fundamentally noncritical. With teachers they would assume the roles of professional colleagues, co-learners, supportive counselors, and friends. Furthermore, they would seek to be understanding listeners, creative problem solvers, and, when necessary, mediators or advocates. Formulating this type of understanding would, in all likelihood, require that leaders engage in thoughtful reflection and dialogue. (pp. 93-94)

Historically, the principal's function as evaluator has undermined the role of supervisor. The contradiction that exists in performing these two tasks is that—at its best—supervision has been interpreted as a helping function, whereas evaluation has traditionally been viewed as one of judging and rating. "Most writers in supervision," explains Ellett (1987), "assume that instructional supervision is a 'support' or 'helping' activity designed as a service for teachers and that this role is incompatible with the school principal's responsibilities as a manager and evaluator of personnel" (p. 304).

An enlightened perspective of evaluation is that it should be "simply one important aspect of the effort to match individual human abilities with organizational goals, objectives, and priorities" (Daresh & Playko, 1995, p. 284). However, this interpretation is an idealistic one that often goes unnoticed by the players who see the process all too often as being primarily punitive and aimed at making retention and nonrenewal decisions at its most negative level or, at its most benign, a "dog and pony" show to satisfy state and district evaluation requirements. Rarely do teachers or administrators interpret the evaluation process as being very helpful in improving teaching and learning. Unfortunately, the evaluation function of the principalship is most often viewed as a time-consuming requirement that creates more problems—perhaps even impeding teachers' sense of professionalism—rather than facilitating growth and development among staff and faculty.

Although varying purposes for evaluating personnel may exist, instructional leadership necessitates that performance evaluation focus on facilitating growth and development among teachers to improve student learning. Instructional leaders

must find ways to make performance evaluation (for everyone, including administrators) a positive, helpful process. It is possible for a school's professional staff working cooperatively to take state- and district-mandated evaluation systems that are less than ideal and turn them into useful, nurturing processes for improving teaching and learning. A school's professional community can literally transform evaluations from traditionally oriented observations, checklists, and ratings that are one-way—top-down or bottom-up—to cooperative endeavors wherein teachers and administrators work as team members to help each other learn, grow, and improve their performances.

The mechanistic processes of evaluation often used in schools today bear little resemblance to reflective practice; indeed, too often they make a mockery of professionalism and the true complexity of teaching and learning. Once- or twice-a-year annual observations made by the administrator hardly equip an instructional leader to assess with any degree of accuracy or analysis the quality of instruction afforded children during a 9-month period. Too, the oversimplified evaluative formats have the potential for doing more damage than good in both process and product. The feedback from such observations, checklists, and ratings render little to no useful feedback from which teachers can improve their performance and are frequently more demoralizing than uplifting and helpful—even when the ratings are all top level. Who can feel professional pride in work that is reduced to evaluation by a couple of observations using a checklist and rating scale? The widgets in the domain of educational productivity defy such simple construction.

Chad Ellett's (1987) estimation of the state-of-the-art in evaluation of teacher performance in the late 1980s sums up the problems that persist more than a decade later:

> Recent case-study analyses of "exemplary" teacher evaluation programs administered at the local district level show that the development and use of teacher evaluation systems for both formative and summative purposes is indeed surrounded by many complex issues. A recent study of teacher evaluation instruments, procedures, and policies used by the one hundred largest school districts showed that:

1. few have comprehensive (3 or more days) training programs for users;
2. most pay "lip service" to fulfilling instructional improvement purposes, but are deficient in the diagnostic structure and procedures necessary to accomplish this task;
3. few are content-valid relative to the research literature on teacher effectiveness; and
4. few have explicitly stated rules or procedures for combining formative and summative observation data. (pp. 305-306)

Despite the national movement in the 1980s for more accountability from schools that led to most states developing and implementing large-scale performance assessment programs requiring systematic collection of data about the quantity and quality of instruction through direct classroom observations of teaching, educational accountability remains an issue mired in confusion. These state initiatives in performance evaluation cost millions of dollars and were extremely time-consuming. Yet they have failed to resolve the accountability dilemma or the evaluation conundrum. According to Razik and Swanson (2001),

> Teacher evaluation is not characterized by a single best or universal method. For example, both the theory and practice of teacher evaluation reflect disagreements as to whether instructor evaluations should detect incompetencies, prevent incompetence, or correct deficiencies, all of which suggest different methodologies and approaches. . . . [T]eacher evaluation may be accomplished for a variety of reasons, none of which are or can be explicitly measured in isolation. In this sense, teacher evaluation, in fact all evaluation, remains a problem. (p. 238)

For the principal as instructional leader, however, a primary reason for performance evaluation should be clear: to improve teaching and learning. Iwanicki (2001) suggests asking the three questions in Box 6.4 to focus evaluation where it should be most centered—on student learning.

BOX 6.4

FOCUSING QUESTIONS FOR IMPROVING EVALUATION OF TEACHERS

1. Were the objectives of the lesson worthwhile and challenging?
2. Did the teacher treat the students with dignity and respect?
3. To what extent did all students achieve the objectives of the lesson? (Iwanicki, 2001, p. 57)

With the purpose clearly established, determining ways to answer these questions and satisfy the purpose for evaluation is less confusing. Lynn Beck's (1994) suggestions for evaluating staff are particularly appropriate for caring leaders who believe that teaching and learning improve best in schools where faculty and staff themselves are nurtured and given the respect and resources to grow and develop as a team, a community of learners. She writes:

> Caring leaders might also promote some fundamental changes in supervisory and evaluative assumptions and methods. . . . They might actively work to change the pervasive belief that effective teaching can be readily quantified and measured and push for multiple approaches to assess the successes of schools, teachers, and students. These leaders might also shift responsibility for supervision to teachers. This could be done through the development of mentoring programs; through the support of teachers' professional organizations; and through relinquishing control of issues such as hiring, "salary, tenure, and forms of promotion." Further, caring leaders might consider subjecting themselves to some form of supervision and evaluation by inviting teachers, students, parents, and other administrators to help them improve professional practice. (p. 95)

Cooperative evaluation can take many forms, but its essence—similar to and closely allied with supportive supervision—is facilitating reflection and honest inquiry into how to improve teaching in its most complex of interpretations. Rogers and Freiberg (1994) assert:

> Teachers are able to build an internal locus of assessment when the principal and school environment support self-learning. . . . Learning from one's successes and mistakes can be the best teacher of all. . . . Knowledge is power, but knowledge about self is the greatest power. (pp. 118-120)

The points in Box 6.5 are examples of concrete ways cooperative evaluation may manifest itself in a school community.

Teaching is a complex process that defies oversimplification in the form of quick and slick observation checklists and limited data on which to base evaluation and feedback. Allan Ornstein (1993) asserts:

> As for teacher evaluation instruments, keep in mind that the human side of teaching is difficult to measure. As a result, it seldom shows up in teacher evaluations. In our attempts to be scientific—to predict and control behavior and assess group patterns—it's too easy to lose sight of the affective side of teaching and the individual differences among teachers. It's too easy to attend to specific types of behavior and cognitive results. (p. 187)

COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It should be obvious to the reader by now that a highly versatile, recommended tool in this instructional leader's toolbox is the use of various forms of work-study groups to facilitate collaboration, reflective practice, and continuous growth and development of people in a school conceptualized as a true learning community. In a community-based approach to school leadership, the whole faculty becomes a collaborative team that identifies strategies, formulates goals, and breaks up the work of improving the quality of

BOX 6.5

EXEMPLARY FORMS OF COOPERATIVE EVALUATION

- *Peer-assisted or team-based evaluation.* Teachers pair up with one or more partners to observe each other, give feedback, dialogue, explore new strategies, and work as a team to help each other improve performance. The focus of evaluation would then be reporting on what the team accomplished for students in light of its own plan of action for addressing the school's improvement goals.
- *Faculty-derived evaluation processes.* Faculty and administrators plan together for the evaluation processes to be used each year.
- *Training in evaluation methods.* Faculty and administration are thoroughly trained in observation and evaluation skills and processes.
- *Teacher-chosen evaluator.* Marginal teachers' choices are included (among faculty- and administrator-selected master teachers/administrators) in forming their evaluation/support team.
- *Master teachers as evaluators.* Master teachers are highly involved in evaluation and supervision of peers. In this role, master teachers are given adequate release time from teaching to mentor, observe, conference, coach, and conduct demonstration teaching.
- *Self-assessment.* Ample opportunity is given for and high value placed on a teacher's own reflections and analysis of his or her performance via journals, formative and summative conferences, and frequent reflective dialogues with a master teacher, mentor, or administrator.
- *Student feedback.* Student feedback and perspectives are routinely sought through developmentally appropriate ways, such as surveys, interviews, and frequent informal discussions with students about quality of teaching, lessons, activities, projects, and assignments.
- *Parent feedback.* Parent feedback (from all parents) is routinely sought regarding their perceptions of their

children's progress, homework, attitudes, and the communication links with the teacher and school.
- *Evaluation themes.* Observations, dialogue, and reflections about instruction focus on what Rubin (1975) identifies as critical teaching areas: a teacher's (1) sense of purpose, (2) perception of students, (3) knowledge of subject matter, and (4) mastery of technique.

instruction into more manageable pieces. "As teachers work together in these study group approaches," write Murphy and Lick (1998), "they alter their practices to provide new and innovative opportunities for their students to learn in challenging and productive new ways" (p. ix). Teams form around mutual interests and complementary skills to pursue various dimensions of school improvement and bring input to the whole group for sharing and facilitating the larger group's goals. This form of institutional problem solving is highly recommended by the current research on effective school leadership today (i.e., Murphy & Lick, 2001; Stiggins, 1997; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). Two of the eight learner-centered professional development principles recommended by Hawley and Valli (2000) are that professional development for teachers and administrators should do the following:

- Provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organized around collaborative problem solving.
- Be continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and outside perspectives. (p. 8)

Work-study groups are characteristic of a professional environment wherein workers as professionals assume more responsibility for the quality, conditions, and standards of their performance and learning, and this is embedded in the culture. Dennis Sparks (2001), former Executive Director of the National Staff Development Council and vocal advocate of professional development via increased interaction among the school's faculty, writes:

> Teachers' learning must be encouraged within the school by high expectations for performance and nurtured by a culture that supports experimentation and collaboration. Such schools provide teachers with regularly scheduled time for learning, planning, and problem solving with other faculty members. (p. 56)

If teachers are expected to grow professionally and improve their teaching, they must have frequent, insightful, concrete feedback on their performance; opportunities to dialogue about and reflect on the nuances of teaching and learning; meaningful participation in work-study groups focused on improving students' learning; and varied forms of assistance in the classroom to develop and refine their professional skill. Neither one-shot workshops, one-size-fits-all approaches to staff development, mandates for improvement, nor autocratic supervisory and evaluative styles are likely to improve instruction significantly, if at all. It is difficult, time-intensive, usually tedious work, but attempts to oversimplify and shortcut around the complexities of improving instruction simply have not worked.

The precise forms that supportive supervision, cooperative evaluation, and collaborative work-study groups will take are, like so much else, dependent on the context of the school. Make no mistake, however; building a professional work culture is no small feat. As Hawley and Valli (2000) write:

> Substantially strengthening teachers' opportunities to improve their teaching will require nothing less than school restructuring, new professional cultures, the reallocation of resources and time, and changes in the role of school districts and popular conceptions of how students and teachers learn. (p. 9)

A site-based, collaborative, whole-team approach to examining how the functions of supervision and evaluation and the use of work-study groups can best facilitate reflective practice and professional growth in a particular school setting is a critical first step to developing a school's internal whetstones for honing professional skills and ensuring peak performance among teachers and administrators as growing, learning members of

the school community. One thing is certain: If teachers and administrators are not learning and growing professionally, students are not likely to be learning much either.

POINTERS FOR THE PRINCIPAL

→ Model and encourage reflective practice.

- ➢ Look for ways to integrate old knowledge with new.
- ➢ Routinely question how well-entrenched, past practices are working.
- ➢ Minimize risks for experimentation to improve teaching and learning.
- ➢ Be an active learner yourself, open to new ideas and practices.

→ Practice supportive supervision.

- ➢ Clarify the purpose of supervision, for improving teaching and learning.
- ➢ Approach supervision as the responsibility of all professionals.
- ➢ Acquaint yourself well with your faculty as people and professionals.
- ➢ Differentiate supervision to meet the needs of the teacher.
- ➢ Provide a team-based support system and mentors for new teachers.
- ➢ Actively seek resources to support teachers' learning.
- ➢ Seek continual improvement but be quick to praise and to celebrate progress.

→ Practice cooperative evaluation.

- ➢ Clarify the purpose of evaluation, for improving teaching and learning.
- ➢ Approach evaluation as the responsibility of all professionals.
- ➢ Focus on the worthiness of lessons, the quality of the interaction between teachers and students, and students' achievement.

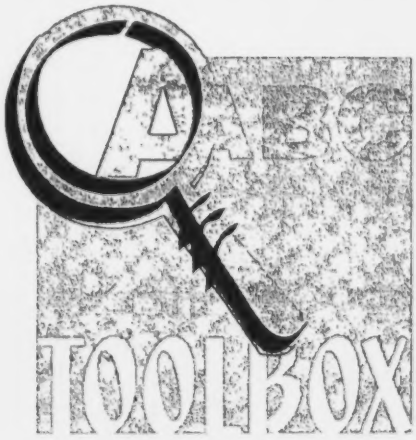
- ➢ Resist evaluation that oversimplifies the complexity of teaching.
- ➢ Remember, success breeds success—and vice versa.

→ Rely on work-study groups as the hub of professional development.

- ➢ Involve the whole faculty in collaboration to help students succeed.
- ➢ Facilitate routine meetings of groups for dialogue and problem solving.
- ➢ Be an active participant in the collaborative process.
- ➢ Facilitate increased professional dialogue about teaching and learning.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Lens of Instructional Leadership



What really counts in public education is that students succeed and become thinking, knowledgeable, and productive citizens, regardless of which path in life they choose.

—Amy Ciliberto (2001, p. 1).

The benefits of learner-centered practice extend to students, teachers, administrators, parents, and all other participants in the educational system.

—Barbara McCombs and Jo Sue Whisler (1997, p. 62).

Principals in the exceptionally good schools choose to be instructional leaders first and administrative leaders second.

—Gilbert R. Austin and Stephen P. Holowenzak (1985, p. 72).

- ❑ Focusing on Learners and Learning
- ❑ Creating a Climate for Learning
- ❑ Communicating High Expectations for Learning
- ❑ Looking for Indicators of Effective Teaching and Learning

No one dimension of school leadership is more paramount than a principal's skill and commitment to focusing the school's work on the learner. How, might one ask, can educators ever *not* do this? Isn't this what the organization of school is all about? Of course it is! However, the learners, the ones most directly impacted by the school's efforts, are also captive participants dependent on their significant adult others to ensure that schools function on their behalf. They usually have little voice in their education or the ability to assess and impact its quality. Unlike businesses whose consumers' pocketbooks rather quickly reflect the quality and appeal of the businesses' products and whose accountability and survival are directly linked to customer satisfaction, the school's mission—the education of children—is less quantifiable, more long range, and dependent on many variables (some of which are beyond the control of the school). Because of these very different circumstances, educators' work can more easily become poorly focused and misdirected, often without their even being aware of it. The business of education is a complex endeavor, dealing with complex processes of pedagogy and learning. That is why a skillful, dedicated leader is needed to focus the work of the school on the learner, to monitor the progress of students, and to facilitate continuous improvement among students and staff as a learning community.

No one strategy, tool, or skill is the unilateral key or sole recipe to improving students' achievement and learning. From Chapter 1 to now, and subsequently in this book, the focus is on the

multiple ways a school principal as an instructional leader influences and facilitates the quality of teaching and learning. Setting in motion a community of learners through approaching leadership from a perspective of shared governance; being guided with a central compass of doing what's best for students; mutual sharing and examination of personal and group beliefs and visions about students, teaching, and learning; developing and often revisiting through reflection and dialogue a shared school vision, mission, goals, and objectives centered on meeting the needs of students; creating a strong school culture of high expectations for students' and staff's performance; facilitating multidirectional communication and feedback loops among all of the school's stakeholders so that teams and work-study groups can dialogue, experiment, and solve problems related to teaching and learning; and capitalizing on processes of reflective practice, supportive supervision, and cooperative evaluation to promote continual growth and development of faculty and staff are all tools for improving teaching and learning.

This chapter zeroes in even more on the importance of the learner in this complex scenario called school and educators' acquiring skills to ensure that the organization is appropriately channeling its efforts on students' behalf. "People," assert McCombs and Whisler (1997), "are at the heart of any living system; attention to learners and learning in educational redesign puts the focus where there is the maximum probability of enhancing positive outcomes" (p. 185). The impetus of schoolwork, with all of its rich dynamics, is taking care of children and facilitating their development as healthy human beings. Understanding children and learning is essential to the work of educators. The rapidly changing demographics of this nation should propel educators to reassess their notions of learners and learning. Anne C. Lewis (2001) posits:

> If I were a teacher or a school administrator, I would reflect on the statistics describing what this nation is becoming and realize that we have an opportunity to try out a different lens through which to view students and their potential. (p. 647)

Along with the dramatic changes in the ethnic makeup of the U.S. population and school-age children, research that illuminates

our understanding of learning has rapidly increased over the last decade, giving educators considerably more reliable information on which to base decisions about programs, curricula, and teaching. Educators must assume the responsibility of keeping abreast of what research has to offer about how learning happens best and how schools, classrooms, principals, and teachers can facilitate the healthy growth, well-being, and learning of children—regardless of race or ethnicity—in our care. Principals as true instructional leaders are exemplars in their relentless quest for information that can be used to improve teaching and learning and to personalize the educational experience for each boy and girl.

FOCUSING ON LEARNERS AND LEARNING

Understanding children and how they grow and learn is essential to teaching and being an effective principal. Although there are developmental factors to consider in completing the educational equation that are basic to human beings and that sweep across time and culture, there are also important differences that are unique to each individual, group, or generation that are critical to making wise pedagogical choices. Nothing takes the place of interacting with students to get to know them as real people—and for them to get to know you as a real person, too—with all of the wonderful, unique qualities that characterize being human. According to Cohen and Ball (2001),

> Although many people think of instruction as what teachers do, it consists of interactions involving teachers, students, and content. . . . [Lessons are] not the result simply of what [teachers] know and do . . . but of how the teachers and students interpret and interact with one another and with the task. (p. 75)

Developing an understanding of and true empathy with students as individuals is a prerequisite to meeting their educational needs and to infusing your work with the passion and caring essential for outstanding leadership. An instructional

leader principal and teacher must interact often and freely with students throughout the school day; take a genuine, personal interest in students; and come to know and truely appreciate each student as a one-of-a-kind person with a unique background and individual talents, weaknesses, and motivations to learn.

Without question, the lens through which the most effective instructional leaders filter their work as principals is a learner-centered lens characterized by two important features, without which such a lens can never develop optimally:

1. *Enjoying children and getting to know them as individuals.* Genuinely enjoying being around and getting to know students greatly enhances a principal's learner-centered acuity. Without this element, the lens will forever be foggy.

2. *Keeping abreast of research on learners and learning.* Keeping the learner-centered lens in tact and sharply focused also requires that the school's leadership team stay abreast of what research has to offer about children and learning, then work together to understand, translate, and best apply this continually evolving information to their own school setting and their students. Principals cannot do this work alone, however; they should be a dynamic part of this important dimension of a school's improvement process.

Research on learning, motivation, and human development so fundamental to improving schools has dramatically increased over the past 15 years. If school reform efforts today are to be aptly centered on the learner and improving children's chances of academic achievement and personal well-being, they must rely on the available research on learning. One such potentially powerful source of information is a recent collaborative initiative supported by the American Psychological Association and the Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory. This cooperative endeavor between psychologists and educational researchers resulted in a set of 12 learner-centered psychological principles consistent with more than a century of research on teaching and learning. These principles were developed specifically to serve as guidelines for school redesign and reform. "Learner-centered psychological principles and a system perspective for incorporating them are necessary components of a new design for schooling,"

write the researchers of this joint initiative (Presidential Task Force on Psychology in Education & American Psychological Association, 1993). They continue:

> The system's perspective must focus on human functions at multiple levels of the educational system (learning, teaching, evaluating, and managing). From this perspective, educational practice will improve only when the educational system is redesigned with the primary focus on the learner. . . . Our immediate goal in offering these learner-centered principles is to provide guidelines that can contribute to current educational reform and school redesign efforts and thus help meet the nation's educational goals. Through dialogue with concerned groups of educators, researchers, and policy makers, these principles can evolve further to contribute not only to a new design for America's schools, but also to a society committed to lifelong learning, healthy human development, and productivity. (Presidential Task Force on Psychology in Education & American Psychological Association, 1993).

The 12 learner-centered psychological principles that apply to all learners and their classifications by domains or issues are shown in Box 7.1.

These principles of learning can be the litmus test in making the most of today's school reform efforts. Reform initiatives should be compatible with the learning principles, and implementation of a strategy should be monitored for its success with criteria drawn from the research on learners and learning. The principles along with the examples of how they are manifested in schools have implications for all aspects of a school's operation, from such obvious areas as instruction, curriculum, and assessment to areas that are (unfortunately) less often tied directly to students' interests such as budgeting and professional development. When viewed through a student-centered lens, the whole school's operation and all decisions are better when channeled toward a school's ultimate mission of doing what's best for students. A principal's role as a true instructional leader is facilitating teaching, learning and a learning environment, teachers' education and continued growth and development, parent and community involvement, and policy making that is supportive of schools as centers of

(Text continued on page 127)

BOX 7.1

LEARNER-CENTERED PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES: METACOGNITIVE AND COGNITIVE FACTORS

Principle 1—The nature of the learning process. Learning is a natural process of pursuing personally meaningful goals, and it is active, volitional, and internally mediated; it is a process of discovering and constructing meaning from information and experience, filtered through the learner's unique perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.

Principle 2—Goals of the learning process. The learner seeks to create meaningful, coherent representations of knowledge regardless of the quantity and quality of data available.

Principle 3—The construction of knowledge. The learner links new information with existing and future-oriented knowledge in uniquely meaningful ways.

Principle 4—Higher-order thinking. Higher-order strategies for "thinking about thinking"—for overseeing and monitoring mental operations—facilitate creative and critical thinking and the development of expertise.

Affective factors

Principle 5—Motivational influences on learning. The depth and breadth of information processed, and what and how much is learned and remembered, are influenced by (a) self-awareness and beliefs about personal control, competence, and ability; (b) clarity and saliency of personal values, interests, and goals; (c) personal expectations for success or failure; (d) affect, emotion, and general states of mind; and (e) the resulting motivation to learn.

Principle 6—Intrinsic motivation to learn. Individuals are naturally curious and enjoy learning, but intense negative cognitions and emotions (e.g., feeling insecure, worrying about failure, being self-conscious or shy, and fearing corporal punishment, ridicule, or stigmatizing labels) thwart this enthusiasm.

Principle 7—Characteristics of motivation-enhancing learning tasks. Curiosity, creativity, and higher-order thinking are stimulated by relevant, authentic learning tasks of optimal difficulty and novelty for each student.

Developmental factors

Principle 8—Developmental constraints and opportunities. Individuals progress through stages of physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development that are a function of unique genetic and environmental factors.

Personal and social factors

Principle 9—Social and cultural diversity. Learning is facilitated by social interactions and communication with others in flexible, diverse (in age, culture, family background, etc.), and adaptive instructional settings.

Principle 10—Social acceptance, self-esteem, and learning. Learning and self-esteem are heightened when individuals are in respectful and caring relationships with others who see their potential, genuinely appreciate their unique talents, and accept them as individuals.

Individual differences

Principle 11—Individual differences in learning. Although basic principles of learning, motivation, and effective instruction apply to all learners (regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, physical ability, religion, or socioeconomic status), learners have different capabilities and preferences for learning mode and strategies. These differences are a function of environment (what is learned and communicated in different cultures or other social groups) and heredity (what occurs naturally as a function of genes).

Principle 12—Cognitive filters. Personal beliefs, thoughts, and understandings resulting from prior learning and interpretations become the individual's basis for constructing reality and interpreting life experiences.

From *Learner-Centered Psychological Principles: Guidelines for School Design and Reform* (pp. 6-9), Presidential Task Force on Psychology in Education and the American Psychological Association, 1993. Copyright 1993 by McREL. Reprinted with permission.

learning for everyone in them. It is incumbent on educators, especially leaders, to understand these principles and to work with faculty, parents, and other administrators to translate these understandings into practices that lead to improved student learning and well-being. This is what should count in accountable leadership.

CREATING A CLIMATE FOR LEARNING

A school or classroom most conducive to students' learning is characterized by having a moderately warm climate—that is, one physically, emotionally, and intellectually inviting for all children and adults. The physical environment itself is the first thing noticeable about a school's climate. Too often schools look like institutions—cold, impersonal, rather uninviting places to spend most of the workday week. Attention to the various dimensions of a school's climate is essential to nurture and optimize teaching and learning.

Condition of Building and Grounds

At minimum, the building and grounds should be safe, clean, and well maintained. With some creative endeavor and participation by all involved in the school, most campuses and buildings can be made reasonably attractive. The objective is to make schools as inviting and conducive to teaching and learning as possible. Hallways and classrooms should be replete with student products, artwork, posters espousing the school's core values and mission, and various manifestations of the school's team spirit and focus on student success. Flexible and adequate space for varied teaching approaches, storage, conferences, team planning, and professional development should be provided. Students and staff should periodically be surveyed for input on ways to improve the facility and grounds.

Psychological Climate

The actual building and grounds should be comfortable, functional, and attractive, of course, but, more important, the

psychological climate should be highly conducive to students' learning as well. Adults' indifference to students' feelings and distinctive personalities can result in student hostility toward learning, the school, and its authority due to resentment and a loss of respect for the adults who show little respect to them.

At the other extreme (a too warm climate), however, too much coddling or too tightly controlling students can lead them to become overly dependent on the adults in their environment. Such treatment stunts students' developmental progress toward greater self-reliance for their learning and assumption of responsibility for their behaviors. Attending to the learning climate and attempting to keep it healthily balanced—neither too cold nor too hot—and facilitative of students' growth as self-sufficient, independent learners is challenging work that requires genuinely liking children, understanding how they learn best, and having great interest in them as individuals with varying cultures, abilities, preferences, and learning styles.

Learner and Learning-Centered Change Strategies

According to Rossi and Montgomery (1994) in their research sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, "Young people need to have adults who are 'crazy' about them. Unfortunately, in our most troubled schools teachers aren't crazy about students, and students aren't crazy about teachers—instead, they are driving each other crazy" (p. 1). This extensive review of the current state of the art in reforming schools to serve better all students' needs offers the following specific proposals for creating a healthy learning environment, "a challenging, non-stigmatizing learning environment that meets student needs":

1. Changes in curriculum—For example, focus on real-world experiences to attract student interest; integration of academic and vocational skills so that students are well-prepared for both college and the job market

2. Changes in instruction—For example, adults as mentors or advocates; provision of race and gender role models; cooperative learning; peer tutors and mentors; one-on-one tutoring; using

computer programs to develop higher order thinking skills, rather than simply as basic skill drills

3. Changes in assessment—For example, alternative or authentic assessments; assessment and recognition of incremental student progress

4. Changes in school organization—For example, creation of smaller academic units within larger schools, or schools within schools; team teaching

5. Closer connections with work or college—For example, university outreach to students at risk; school-to-work apprenticeship programs (p. 4)

Pull-out programs, special education classes, ability grouping by whole classes, and grade retention are traditional forms of responding to special needs of students. Such practices have not worked well and may have, in fact, further limited certain students' chances of academic success, their self-esteem, and their overall optimism toward school and, ultimately, their life choices. "Remedial help, before- and after-school programs, summer school, instructional aides to work with target children in the regular classroom, and no-cost peer tutoring are all more effective than retention," conclude many researchers, in addition to these authors, Shepard and Smith (1990), in their synthesis of research on grade retention (p. 86).

Although no one strategy is likely to provide the solution to meeting the diverse needs of today's students, researchers and educators are now turning to programs and strategies that emphasize higher-order thinking skills, mainstreaming, cooperative learning, and inclusion as strategies most likely to help all students learn. These strategies are recommended for students having academic problems as well as for the high achievers and rely less on low-level drill-and-practice exercises, tracking, and grade retention as primary methods for assisting students who are underachievers.

COMMUNICATING HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR LEARNING

High expectations for students' and teachers' successes are an essential building block in creating a healthy school culture, one

focused on teaching and learning. "You usually get what you expect from people" is a frequently used quote, and in dealing with children or adults, it usually holds true. Expectations for high achievement among adults and children in a school are manifested in many ways other than in what is said. In fact, actions speak louder than words every time. The following questions can assist leaders in knowing what to look for as they enhance their learner-centered lens to analyze their school's daily operation and understand the messages being communicated in many ways about the performance expectations of teachers and students:

- How well kept are the building and grounds? Is the school an attractive, pleasant place to be? Does it beam with pride?
- How friendly, caring, and respectful are people to each other?
- How common is active teaching and learning in classrooms, with students clearly engaged in learning and interacting—with the teacher and each other—in the learning process?
- For what are rewards and celebrations given most frequently and to whom? What safety nets are in place to keep kids from falling through the cracks?
- What routine interventions are taken to ensure a child's academic success and feelings of well-being?
- What support systems are formally functioning to support new and veteran teachers to ensure their success and continued growth?
- Is instructional time protected and treated as a scarce, precious commodity?
- How upbeat and optimistic about learning are the behaviors, conversations, and attitudes of adults and children in the school?
- How welcomed and seriously involved are community members and parents as partners in learning and the education of their children (in ways more meaningful and central to children's learning than volunteer efforts and fund-raising)?
- How much of the adult conversation (in lounges, faculty meetings, etc.) is focused on improving teaching and learning and helping students succeed?

- How often and how well (using multiple sources) are students' welfare and academic progress monitored?
- How clearly are expectations for performance communicated to all students (in developmentally appropriate ways) and are all students evaluated fairly and according to procedures made clear to them?
- How well are all students given opportunities to excel and be recognized for their individual strengths and unique abilities and talents?
- Are students (in developmentally appropriate ways) expected and encouraged to participate increasingly in the management of their own learning and have input into their classroom's and school's operations?
- How thoroughly do the principal and faculty collect, analyze, and disaggregate varied data to understand how well all children are learning and how data are used to make decisions?
- Do teachers and administrators frequently arrive early, stay late, or work in study groups to help children—and each other—succeed?
- Do you, the principal, enjoy being in your position and coming to work?

The importance of high expectations to learning has been well documented in the literature (e.g., Cotton's 1995 research synthesis on effective schooling practices). However, it is not a dimension that can be easily or artificially injected into a school's dynamics. High expectations for performance—everyone's performance in the school community—begin with strong, participatory leadership and a faculty and staff willing to come together as a team driven by a passion for children's well-being and learning.

One of the most consistent pieces of research on effective schools is research related to the high, positive correlation between student achievement and parental involvement (Austin & Holowenzak, 1985; Cotton, 1995; Epstein, 1987). A school culture and environment that communicates high expectations for students' success is one in which high expectations are also evident for parents as partners with the school in the

hard work of educating children. High expectations for parents' participation in the education of their children should be clearly evident in the school culture. This important element of parental involvement sends important messages to children and sets the stage for their success or failure. The Canters (1991) write:

> An uninvolved parent, justifiably or not, gives a child the message that the child just isn't important enough to warrant close attention. An involved parent, on the other hand, can provide the boost to a student's self-esteem that will lead to greater success in school and a more fulfilling and accomplished adulthood. (p. 5)

Parents are, after all, the most important people in a child's life with the most potential to influence and motivate the child. It is, then, no surprise that parental involvement is often listed as a critical variable for schools improving their effectiveness. In her review of research related to parental involvement, Epstein (1987) writes,

> The evidence is clear that parental encouragement, activities, and interest at home and participation in schools and classrooms affect children's achievements, attitudes, and aspirations, even after student ability and family socioeconomic status are taken into account. (p. 120)

What is surprising, however, is that though educators often lament the lack of parental interest in their child's education, few make concerted efforts to involve parents in meaningful ways in students' education or to make parents true partners in the work of the school. Epstein (1987) attempts an explanation for this dichotomy:

> The lack of active administrative leadership and attention is due, in part, to the dearth of useful, organized information on parent involvement in schools. There are many types of parent involvement, and it is unclear how each type contributes to school effectiveness. There are many real problems associated with parent involvement, and solving them takes time and perseverance. Yet, it is the administrator's role

> to orchestrate activities that will help the staff study and understand parent involvement, and to select or design, evaluate, and revise programs for parent involvement. (p. 120)

One major role of today's leaders is to oversee and ensure that policies and practices in the school (from K–12) affirm parents' roles as partners with teachers in their children's education. In a major study on parental involvement supported by the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education (Epstein, 1987), results showed that

> surprisingly, large numbers of parents are excluded from some of the most common, traditional communications from the school. In our survey more than one-third of the parents had no conference with the teacher during the year. Almost two-thirds never talked with a teacher by phone. Although most teachers (over 95%) reported that they communicate with the parents of their students, most parents are not involved in deep, detailed, or frequent communications with teachers about their child's program or progress. (p. 124)

Better parental involvement should be more than a often-repeated, rhetorical aspiration of principals and teachers. In their study of exceptional schools, Austin and Holowenzak (1985) concluded that

> parents play an important and integral part. They feel their opinions are valued and they are involved in important decisions that affect the lives of their children. Principals who have high expectations for parents, teachers, and children must demonstrate this by involving them in meaningful ways. (p. 74)

Schools should take the initiative to pave the way through policy and good practice to develop better forms of parental participation in children's education. There are myriad ways an administrator can use his or her role to influence and guide better working relationships and communication between the home and school.

The recommendations resulting from the research of Joyce Epstein (1987) and a publication by Lee and Marlene Canter (1991) titled *Parents on Your Side* are only two of many current resources for assisting schools and leaders who are serious about initiating stronger links with parents and thereby improving considerably the probability of their students' success. The Canters assert,

> The vast majority of parents of your students really do want to be involved. They do care about their children and want to provide needed support. In many cases, however, they just don't know what to do—or if they should do it at all. To put it into perspective, only 25% of parents report receiving systematic requests or directions from teachers on how they can help their children academically. However, when requested to give additional assistance, over 85% of parents immediately responded and were willing to spend at least 15 minutes per day working with their children. In short, when parents are contacted by skilled, trained teachers who communicate effectively, they will respond." (pp. 6-7)

Parent involvement may take many forms and must be tailored to the particular school and community setting, but in any school it should be far more than chauffeuring field trips and fund-raising. Administrators and teachers have the responsibility and the prime opportunity to aggressively pursue stronger partnerships with parents that encourage their greater participation in children's learning. A child's education is, after all, a shared responsibility between the home and school; it only follows that it should also be a shared endeavor.

High expectations are a result of a school-based team—a learning community—having committed themselves to a shared mission, vision, and a set of group-defined goals for the organization and themselves in meeting the needs of students. The processes for developing and maintaining these organizational blueprints help facilitate partnerships, team spirit, and energy that set in motion high expectations for success and keep them renewed and mirrored throughout the school, in the home, and—most importantly for the mission of schools—in the classroom, the center of teaching and learning.

LOOKING FOR INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

In their quest for instructional leadership as a major role, today's principals should not mistakenly diminish the importance of the teachers' role in instructional leadership in the school. In their recent article on school effectiveness, Thomas and Bainbridge (2001)—former school superintendents—assert unequivocally that the teacher is the primary instructional force in schools:

> Instructional effectiveness is the responsibility of teachers. The principal may be a leader, but accountability for effective instruction belongs to teachers. Principals may understand instruction and support it, but they do not teach the curriculum. . . . Teachers are the heart and soul of any school system. They are the models we remember as adults. We must give teachers the instructional authority and the freedom to make individual decisions for each boy and girl in their classrooms. (p. 55)

What is effective instruction? Most performance evaluation checklists fall far short of nailing down good teaching. Is teaching an art or a science? Can it be defined or is it too much art, too little science? These conundrums remain with us, but they are less puzzling than they used to be. Research on learning in the last couple of decades has produced some exceptionally helpful information to improve instruction. It has not, however, produced a unilaterally most preferred approach to teaching. Without question, teaching styles—as well as the definition of good teaching—vary widely. This should not prevent educators, however, from tapping into the increasing well of research on pedagogy and learning—studying it, discussing it, and drawing from good data on student performance to make decisions regarding instruction. That is what work-study groups should be doing; that is what the school leadership should be doing; that is what instructional leadership is all about.

The Complexity of Effective Teaching

Teaching is infinitely complex and challenging; this is both the thrill and the ill of the profession. There is no one right way to

teach, just as there is no one right way to learn. Instruction based on what is known about how children learn best can vary widely in its individual interpretation and manifestation. "Not all learner-centered teachers believe or think in exactly the same way or engage in the same practices. . . . [L]earner-centered teaching is as much a way of being, a disposition, as it is doing one thing or another" (McCombs & Whisler, 1997, p. 100).

According to Hoyle, English, and Steffy (1994), important indicators of teaching effectiveness are the teacher's maximization of time to increase learning, their matching of materials to the students' abilities, and the high expectations they exhibit for themselves and their students. These performances, though observable, are not overly prescriptive and are so closely tied to students' learning that it is impossible to see many of them without simultaneously looking at students and their performance. Hoyle et al. (p. 147) state that an effective teacher:

- Motivates students to achieve
- Uses academic learning time effectively
- Demonstrates proficiency in subject areas
- Demonstrates command of the language
- Promotes student academic growth
- Establishes clear learning objectives
- Bases learning strategies on objectives
- Bases testing on objectives

Although there certainly are many other behaviors that contribute to a teacher's performance, these authors contend that these are core essential elements, without which no other behavior holds much value.

Allan C. Ornstein (1993) cautions that research on teacher styles and teacher competencies—the two major categories of teaching research—both fail to deal adequately with the human element in teaching. In the profession's quest to quantify and analyze teaching in terms of a specified set of preferred behaviors, important human dimensions are overlooked or dismissed:

> [Such research] fails to take into account the emotional, qualitative, and interpretive descriptions of classrooms and the joys of teaching. It takes little note of social and psychological

> factors in teaching, and it recommends few of these factors as effective. . . . This research stresses narrow student outcomes based on knowledge-based achievement. But the researchers pay little attention to the thought processes involved in learning—especially the ability to think critically, solve problems, approach ideas creatively, and carry out other forms of high-level cognition. . . . Learning experiences that deal with character, spiritual outlook, and philosophy are absent. The personal and human dimension of teaching is usually ignored—a sad commentary for a helping profession. (p. 26)

Personalization of Students' Educational Experiences

There are many different ways to approach differentiating instruction and tailoring children's school experience to meet their individual needs while capitalizing on the students' strengths. Teachers relate to children in their own individual, sometimes very different but oftentimes equally effective, ways. It is not important that teachers behave the same way. What is important for all teachers, however, is to reach out—in their own special ways—and respond to children as individuals who need to know that they too are special, cared for, and appreciated for their differences by the adults in their world.

Such personalization of students' education is consistent with the learning principles outlined in the beginning of this chapter and can be recognized in classrooms by features such as the following:

- Students frequently have choices in how they pursue their learning (e.g., choosing their own projects, choosing whether to work individually or with a team, choosing how they would like to demonstrate competency).
- Students work at different paces, frequently doing different things.
- Students are actively engaged in learning, both individually and in groups.
- Students show excitement about learning new things.
- Multiple methods are used in assessing student achievement—assessments vary among students.

- Curriculum content is integrated, based on meaningful themes and units and students' interests, and often results in student projects.
- Students are encouraged to reflect often on their own progress (e.g., use of student portfolios; student-led, parent-teacher-student conferences regarding students' progress; self-assessment opportunities; journals and logs).
- Students have multiple channels for frequent feedback regarding their growth and progress.
- Students participate in classroom decisions.
- Students assume increasing responsibility for their conduct and learning.
- Students are encouraged to think for themselves.
- Interaction between students and the students and teacher is mutually respectful and kind.
- All students receive an equitable share of the teacher's attention.
- Students move about freely but are purposefully focused on learning.

"In the final analysis," conclude Keefe and Jenkins (2002), "personalized instruction reflects deep concerns for learners and the willingness to search for ways to adjust the teaching/learning environment to meet the learning needs of individual students" (p. 440).

In the February 2002 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*, a special section is devoted to personalized instruction. Two of the contributing authors, James Keefe and John Jenkins, describe how two schools (Thomas Haney Secondary Centre in Maple Ridge, British Columbia and Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School in Devens, Massachusetts) personalize instruction using their own unique approaches. Keefe and Jenkins point out that though each school's approach is unique, there are some commonalities underlying the differences, including the following: (1) a dual teacher role of coach and advisor; (2) the diagnosis of relevant student learning characteristics; (3) a collegial school culture; (4) an interactive learning environment; (5) flexible scheduling and pacing; and (6) authentic assessment (p. 450). These personalizing features also characterize learner-centered classrooms and instruction and are consistent with the principles of learning

derived from research. They do not suggest a single way of achieving them, however. Ornstein (1993) espouses,

> The most effective teachers endow their students with a "can-do" attitude, with good feelings about themselves that are indirectly and eventually related to cognitive achievement. . . . We're wrong to insist that all teachers must use certain methods and procedures. Instead, we must permit teachers to teach according to their own personalities, teaching philosophies, and goals. . . . Although research on teacher competencies offers insight into good teaching, it can lead us to become too rigid in our view of effective teaching. (p. 27)

That is precisely why it is more important to center our attention on the learner and the research on learning, rather than on the teacher, the content, and the research on teaching. We know much more about learning than we do about teaching. After all, teaching has no meaning apart from learning; teaching is the means to an end—students' learning. Acting on what is good for learners and learning allows—even requires—various teaching styles and techniques that are suited to the strengths and talents of the individual teachers. Teachers working together routinely to share their ideas and to create a more challenging and rigorous instructional program that focuses on their particular group of students is the most credible strategy for improving the organization of schools for the purpose of providing students with a quality, personalized education. Educators—teachers and principals—operating throughout the day with an informed, learner-centered lens are better equipped to recognize when the learner-centered principles are being enacted and when they are being violated and subsequently take more immediate and appropriate action to facilitate students' learning. Collaborating in study groups and as teams of professional educators, administrators and teachers are better able to attend to the complex, multifaceted needs of students and ensure that each child is given the attention and expertise to enable him or her to succeed. A well-developed learner-centered lens can enable educators—individually and collectively—to focus more clearly and directly on what matters most throughout the school's many functions: what's best for students, their well-being, and their education.

POINTERS FOR THE PRINCIPAL

→ Focus your work on learners and learning.

- ➢ Enjoy, interact with, and really get to know your students.
- ➢ Keep abreast of research on learning.
- ➢ Sharpen your learning/learner-centered lens through practice.

→ Create a climate that nurtures learning.

- ➢ Encourage students' evolving independence as learners.
- ➢ Attend to the physical, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of the learning environment.
- ➢ Frequently seek and use student input to improve the school.
- ➢ Provide support for underachievers without stigmatizing them.

→ Set high expectations for learning among students and adults.

- ➢ Expect, first and foremost, the best from yourself.
- ➢ Assess the school's performance through a learner-centered lens.
- ➢ Involve parents in authentic participation in their child's education.
- ➢ Make sure your actions reflect learning as your top priority in the school.

→ Be a familiar, supportive presence in classrooms.

- ➢ Improve your observation skills to assess more accurately the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms.
- ➢ Facilitate routine collaboration to improve students' success.

- ➢ Don't confuse teaching style and instructional effectiveness.
- ➢ Work with teachers as genuine partners in instructional leadership.
- ➢ Actively seek to improve and personalize the education of each child.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Tape Measures, Plumb Lines, and Common Sense

What Counts in Accountability

Our emphasis on accountability fails to take into consideration the single clear fact of life: children are different.

—Rex Knowles and Trudy Knowles (2001, p. 390).

What is needed is a results-oriented management system that focuses internal attention on producing quality schoolwork for children.

—Phillip C. Schlechty (1990, p. 142).

Student accountability should be based on multiple, formative assessments.

—*ASCD's Education Update* (2001, p. 6).

There has to be a commitment on the part of leaders to develop a collective vision that goes beyond raising scores on state tests.

—Wendy McCloskey and Nancy McMunn (2000, p. 120).

The decisions so quickly available from intuition must sometimes be checked for accuracy by formal analysis, while those produced by careful analysis must generally be confirmed intuitively for face validity.

—H. Mintzberg (1994).

- ❑ Assuming the Accountability Reins
- ❑ Making Good Sense and Best Use of Standards
- ❑ Focusing on Classrooms for Accountability and Students' Achievement

No toolbox to assist principals today would be complete without tools for dealing with today's accountability issues: high-stakes testing and standards. Accountability and standards are the dominant educational themes ushering in a new millennium. Closely allied with both the accountability and standards movement is the third, dark horse, member of the group—high-stakes testing. "High-stakes state tests with important consequences for educators

and students," lament McCloskey and McMunn (2000) of SERVE, the South Eastern Regional Vision for Education, "have become the accountability tool of choice in many states as policy makers struggle to find ways to increase student achievement levels" (p. 115).

There is no single definition of accountability nor perfected set of standards for student performance. Accountability encompasses a broad spectrum of issues—accountability from whom, for what, and how are all separate and important dimensions of the issue. Across this nation individual state-constructed systems chug away at their attempts to make public schools more accountable. And each state does it differently. "Increasingly," notes Robert L. Linn (2001), codirector of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, "states are using their accountability systems as much for measuring school status as for student achievement. . . . But the methods by which states rank schools or measure improvement vary greatly" (p. 1).

Although the public cries out for more accountability from educators, principals and teachers are faced with shrinking pools of resources to deal with mounting complexities in meeting students' needs: Teacher and principal shortages are now a nationwide phenomenon; tax dollars to support schools and education must be stretched to meet increased public needs; and meeting the needs of today's pluralistic student population to ensure students a good education requires more sophisticated and specialized skill as well as financial and human resources than in the past. It is no secret to today's educators that they are expected, and more often mandated by legislation, to do more with less.

This chapter offers three types of enablers to assist today's school leaders in becoming more accountable instructional leaders who have the skill and understanding to resist being sucked into the undertow of today's confusing forces for quick and easy accounting by the schools. The tools in this chapter include principals' better understanding of (1) the importance of principals' positive, proactive leadership in helping schools assume appropriate accountability for their role in students' learning; (2) the mired standards movement and appropriate uses of standards to help schools improve; and (3) the competent assessment of students' classroom performance to significantly diminish the focus on annual, standardized testing as the primary proof of students' achievement and the school's accountability.

ASSUMING THE ACCOUNTABILITY REINS

Maintaining optimism and hope while dealing with dichotomous forces in the accountability fray requires great skill, dedication, and tenacity from educators. The most effective principals do more than ride the tide and hope to stay afloat; they provide leadership to a school community in dealing with these issues in proactive, positive ways that do not demoralize faculty, undermine the community's confidence, skirt the issues, or put the school on the defensive. "The principals of tomorrow's schools must be instructional leaders who possess the requisite skills, capacities, and commitment to lead the accountability parade, not follow it" (Tirozzi, 2001, p. 438). Being proactive by taking the initiative to account for what is happening in the school and how well children are learning is an important posture for today's principal to assume. Schlechty (1990) saliently deduces, "The results by which school systems must be led are the results that are consistent with the purpose of school, as that purpose is articulated in the school's vision statement and belief structure" (p. 141). A school with a well-thought-out vision and mission that are alive and reflected in the school's operation should not be shaken by the turbulent winds of the accountability confusion sweeping the nation. Shared beliefs, values, mission, and goals all form the bedrock upon which a learning organization builds and returns frequently for reexamination, renewal, and guidance in dealing with the many issues on the educational landscape.

Unfortunately, we have not done so well as a professional community in taking the initiative to clarify and assume our rightful share of the responsibility for students' achievement. Despite platitudes and rhetoric about all children being able to learn, we have stopped short of taking the lead in garnering the resources and support that many children must have to succeed in school. Schools cannot do it alone, nor should they be expected to. But they are in the ideal position to advocate for all children and to coordinate and orchestrate bringing the various potential resources together to ensure children have what they need to succeed, in school and life. Historically, educators' commitment to being accountable for children's learning seems to fade dramatically from paper to practice—from rhetorical mission statements

and philosophy documents to behaviors in classrooms and throughout schools. Children don't respond to mission statements that remain dormant and unlived, a mission that is only a dry paper document. John Merrow (2001), executive producer of "The Merrow Report," puts it this way:

> They [the public] have come by their mistrust honestly. [T]he obvious truth [is] . . . that educators have not held themselves accountable. The system has, for the most part, skated along with the attitude "We taught the material, so don't blame us if they didn't learn it." This has been the unspoken modus operandi, which, if you think about it, is perfectly consistent with high sounding public platitudes like "All children can learn." ('They can, but it's up to them, and if they don't, it's their fault, not ours!' is the unspoken second half of the aphorism.) (p. 654)

This attitude has been largely responsible for landing educators in the position today of having to be on the defensive and of having to respond to outsiders—the public, business leaders, and politicians—who are attempting to force schools to prove accountability, defined, unfortunately now, by those outside the school. Merrow (2001) laments this dilemma, claiming, "Unfortunate decisions are being made as pressure for 'accountability' overwhelms common sense" (p. 654). Given the mobility of students today, coupled with the fierce competition for dwindling public resources, having more common standards nationwide and being more accountable for students' education seem only prudent. The problem is agreeing on just what constitutes reasonable and fair standards, who should be accountable for what in a child's educational experience, and how schools can best account for their role in a child's education.

Viewing schools as mere factories and children as widgetlike products leads to flawed thinking about appropriate measures of school accountability. Schlechty (1990) writes:

> A results-oriented management system will have little chance of success so long as students are viewed as products. Such a view allows for too much scapegoating, and it is based on assumptions that are not believable to teachers and

> administrators. . . . Schools will never improve if educators allow others to put them into the test-score, keeping-children-in-school, reducing-vandalism-rates and reducing-suspensions business. (pp. 139-140)

No one best system of accountability seems to exist, but Linn (2001) makes suggestions for states to follow that will help to put the focus for accountability where it should be—on students, teaching, and learning, not on test scores. His article on standards-based accountability systems across this nation includes the following sound recommendations for maximizing the likelihood of an accountability system's contributing to improved student learning while minimizing negative consequences:

1. Place more emphasis on school improvement than on current performance.
2. Report the margin of error for any school result.
3. As required by the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, evaluate the validity of the uses and interpretations of assessment results.
4. Validate trends with results from other indicators such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress and other state tests. (p. 4)

The important points made by Linn are that school accountability should be based on multiple criteria and should include school improvement processes substantiated by a smorgasbord of data, only one piece of which would be standardized test results. Such an approach to accountability would then itself be most accountable.

Systemic processes for ensuring that schools are appropriately focused on teaching and learning are well supported and documented in the extant research on organizational effectiveness. Accountability measures should be focused on those things we know are important about schools, children, and learning. Assessing a school for the quality of its system's fundamental processes can be one very legitimate means of holding educators accountable in the short term, while the processes in place have

the time needed to make changes that will ultimately impact student achievement in the long run. "Real change and real accountability depend on a whole-school reform agenda with a systemic plan that ensures continued interaction among faculty members at all levels and across disciplines" (Tirozzi, 2001, p. 438). Such process standards would not attempt to dictate how a school functions but, rather, would describe the kinds of systemic functions characteristic of a healthy organization centered properly on the well-being of its charges and central mission—teaching and learning.

Characteristics of a well-run school would include the existence of fundamentally sound processes that may take a variety of site-specific forms. These processes are as follows:

- Multidirectional channels of communication and interaction exist among all stakeholders for input as well as feedback and information sharing.

- A reflective, inquiry-driven school culture brings to life the school's shared vision and mission with high expectations for everyone's performance.

- Clearly written and well-communicated instructional vision, mission, goals, and objectives are tailored by the stakeholders at the school level for that school's particular student population.

- School renewal processes and curriculum development are viewed as continuous, are focused on students' learning, and are a readily discernable part of the school's daily operation. Faculty, community members, students, and administrators collaborate in work-study teams (i.e., interdepartmental, subject area, cross-grade-level, grade-level, ad hoc problem-solving) that have frequent, routine time for reflection and dialogue.

- Student assessment is multifaceted, treated as learning experiences more than as tools for grading and sorting students, used to provide specific input and direction to teachers for further instruction, responded to with detailed feedback to students for improvement, and heavily oriented toward authentic performances to demonstrate learning and skill. Collective approaches

to evaluation are included as a valued form of assessing students' work. Teachers work together on complex issues, such as developing evaluation rubrics; use of portfolios for student evaluation; giving more helpful, concrete feedback to students; and team assessment of students to make assessment most meaningful for the student—that is, as a key learning opportunity—and for the teachers themselves to use students' performances to analyze their own teaching skill and success.

- Many opportunities exist for staff to work with administrators and each other to give and receive feedback on their instruction and performance as members of a school community of learners. Teachers are treated as professionals who are capable and eager to improve their effectiveness and be most in charge of their own improvement, with ample support from the school and district and frequent feedback from colleagues, administrators, students, and parents.

- Learning and improvement are on everyone's agenda in the school community. Although children's growth and development come first, the school as a learning organization systematically and routinely expects, supports, and encourages the continued learning and development of everyone in the school; professional development with mentoring and support for new teachers is ongoing via the work-study groups and various collaborative endeavors taking place throughout the school's weekly operation. Opportunities for faculty to observe each other, visit selected sites off campus, attend conferences, and participate in arranged workshops are also available as additional means of growth and development, all of which are appropriate forms of professional growth when matched well to the purpose and when clearly focused on the improvement of teaching and learning.

- Evaluation and supervision processes focus on facilitating teacher growth and development and are cooperative endeavors that are clearly linked to students' achievement.

- All stakeholders are involved in meaningful ways in the operation of the school and have ownership of the school's vision,

mission, goals, and strategies through their shared development with others in the school community.

- Children are encouraged to take an active part in their learning and assessment. They are involved in their own learning and assessment in ways appropriate to their level and age and may even take the lead in conferences to discuss their progress with their parents and teachers.

The following lists include rudimentary do's and don'ts for administrators to consider, which in some instances require leaders to do some strategizing, get better informed about testing, and generally be proactive in dealing accountably with standardized testing and its data. Few shortcuts exist on the road to school improvement and excellent leadership, but following these few pieces of advice should prove worth the time and effort required of school leaders and faculty who see the importance of asserting their influence in the accountability movement.

○ *Do*

1. Dig deeply! Take the time and find the resources to understand and teach to faculty (who should share with parents) all about the standardized tests that students must take and what the test data means (and does not mean) and what it actually reveals about student achievement.
2. Keep reports to the media and board straightforward and simple, using charts or graphs to illustrate for better understanding when possible.
3. Be so well informed about standardized tests that you can (and do) speak with professional prowess about its limitations as a high-stakes device for promotion, graduation, or school's and educators' accountability.
4. Always be honest about strengths and weaknesses indicated by the test results.
5. Whenever possible, use annual test results longitudinally to track achievement of students over time; be aware,

however, of problems created by revised forms of a test and other changes in the tests used when trying to compare a certain year's set of data with another.

6. Disaggregate test data to see how well particular groups of children are achieving (e.g., by race, gender, socioeconomic status).
7. Analyze test data to see how students in the school are performing on specific skills and use this data as one source of input for renewing and revising curriculum, planning instruction, and planning for staff development.
8. Plan broadly for student assessment with faculty, parents, and students so that everyone understands that the standardized test is only one source of data used to account for students' achievement and should be taken seriously, but not inappropriately emphasized.

❍ *Don't*

1. Be afraid to ask questions and speak up when you don't understand how the test functions and what the test data means. Otherwise, improper uses of data are likely to be made. It is imperative for the principal and faculty to understand what standardized testing is and what it is not, what its data can tell us and how they can be abused.
2. Be afraid to speak up for what you believe in and to share with parents and the community the limitations of standardized testing as a high-stakes assessment device.
3. Overemphasize standardized testing by either overstressing its importance over other indicators of student success or trying to defend the school because of poor test results.
4. Take valuable time out of the school day to have practice sessions on taking the test.
5. Put unnecessary stress on teachers to teach to the test. If curriculum work is ongoing among the faculty, test data

and standards will be properly used to emphasize certain content objectives and will be reflected in daily classroom instruction.

6. Marginalize the importance of test data. If they are important to the public, they better be important to the school. Put the test in perspective and remember to use it to focus on how to improve student achievement.

7. Set yourself up to be on the defensive about test data. Make it routine to present to the board and media student achievement data from all sources and the school's plan to make the most use of the data to improve teaching and learning. This way, standardized test scores are more legitimately used as part of a larger picture of student performance indicators and are less likely to throw the school or system a curve with warped or skewed data.

MAKING GOOD SENSE AND BEST USE OF STANDARDS

In the frenzied, diffused flurry to force improvement on the schools, too often policymakers and legislators (and sometimes educators) overlook the complexity of the task. "Voting for standards," Merrow (2001) insightfully notes, "is a lot easier than actually creating them" (p. 655).

There is a profusion of standards today. It seems only prudent for educators, especially those who would be leaders, to be able to clarify just what we mean when we take a stand for or against them. There are student performance standards, content standards, teacher certification standards, principal licensure standards, program standards, evaluation standards, state standards, national standards, and a growing number of professional organizations' own versions of standards (e.g., NCTM, NCSS, ISSLC, NCATE, AASA, NASSP, NAESP). Just keeping up with the latest set of standards in the education profession is difficult to do. Many standards are quite useful as guides for improving everything from leadership preparation programs and professional assessment and growth to implementation of curricular innovations,

to name just a few. The most controversial of the standards, however, are those tied to K–12 schools' accountability—content and performance standards.

Content standards define the curriculum—what should be taught to students; performance standards answer how the standards will be assessed—what students must do to demonstrate mastery of the content. A third type of standard that is mentioned less often but which is noteworthy is the type sometimes referred to as opportunity to learn standards. These standards stipulate what students must have had available to them in school for them to be held accountable for meeting the standards for promotion or graduation (Nave, Meich, & Mosteller, 2000, p. 129).

None of these standards is simple or easy to develop, but all three types are important to include, and—if done well—they have the potential to facilitate badly needed reform in schools where too many students are simply not receiving a quality education sufficient for their success as contributing members of this society. Having good standards in the first place is one issue; another is using them in ways that truly benefit schools and students. "Rather than trying so hard to bring up test scores by concentrating solely on tests themselves," writes John Franklin in *ASCD's Education Update* (2001, p. 8), "educators and administrators could bring those scores up by incorporating the standards into their curricula and using them to prepare their students instead." In other words, standards should be used primarily for guiding school improvement and accreditation processes, rather than mandating specified curriculum content and requiring accountability based on students' performance on a standardized test. If the standards are not well written or dealt with in a competent, professional manner, they—like anything else—are more a liability than an asset in school improvement initiatives. The reform focus is too often oversimplified and operates on what seems to be the assumption that mandates, and in some cases rewards and punishments, will be sufficient incentives to improve instruction and raise student achievement. This approach is particularly heinous to the education profession because it does not acknowledge the possibility that if teachers and administrators had the skills, knowledge, and resources to improve, they would probably have already done so. McCloskey and McMunn (2000) make an important, related point:

> In our work with schools, we have observed that translating state standards into clear instructional goals (and classroom assessments) is often an overwhelming and difficult task for educators. . . . Studies of high-performing schools make it clear that improving school quality is at heart a people process—teachers collaboratively implementing a challenging curriculum and getting support to reflect on how they can make instruction and assessment powerful and engaging. . . . Finding the time to give teachers for this kind of improvement of practice is a key problem that leaders at all levels need to address. (pp. 118-119)

Yet, the public outcry is for short-term, fast results and school improvement accounted for by almost exclusive reliance on standardized test results. In their recent article on the problems with the accountability movement, Rex Knowles and Trudy Knowles (2001) write:

> Even the most naïve statistician knows that half of all people who take a norm-referenced test will be below average. That's what average means. Statistical accountability makes some children "leftovers". . . . And teaching merely to get test results not only deprives students of the opportunity to think, question, reason, or disagree, it also informs 50% of the group that they are below average and tells 10% that they are just no good at all! (p. 391)

Due in part to the poor quality of most current content standards, the related performance standards and tests for accountability lack the depth and breadth of what education at its best should be. Merrow (2001) suggests that "the move to create standards is out of synch with what is actually happening in schools right now. Today, we're testing with a vengeance, well before the system has had time to get ready" (p. 654).

As a unilateral device, testing for accountability does little or nothing to improve schools and may indeed make them even worse—especially for some children. The Knowles' (2001) vehemently express their malcontent with the accountability movement today: "In our emphasis on accountability, we operate as though individual differences don't exist. That's just plain stupid.

But we also operate as though differences shouldn't exist, and that's just plain cruel" (p. 392). The most insipid dangers of the standards movement are too rigidly interpreting and applying them to all children, expecting results too fast, and trying to account for them with annually administered, standardized test scores alone. Such practices rob students and teachers of opportunities for the most complex, dynamic aspects of teaching and learning—unbridled play with imagination and creativity and time to laugh, getting to know each other as individuals, and finding joy in learning.

Allan Jones (2001), a principal in Illinois, in a recent article in *Phi Delta Kappan* makes a convincing case against today's standards movement:

> We must begin to remove the obstacles that prevent teachers and administrators from doing their jobs well. These obstacles range from state mandates that generate mountains of paperwork to a lack of basic resources—access to a telephone, a computer, a room in which to talk alone with a colleague. Creating learning experiences that are meaningful and engaging requires an enormous amount of thought and energy. (p. 464)

No superimposed set of standards or pen and paper standardized tests for accountability can short-circuit the reflective processes that are essential for good teaching and learning to take place.

"The more detailed and specific a set of standards is," assert Bohn and Sleeter (2000), "the less room it affords teachers . . . to bring their own thinking or children's own experiences to the task of teaching and learning" (p. 158). This concern for what the Knowles' (2001) term a "foolish emphasis on sameness" in the accountability and standards movement is shared by a growing number of educators:

> If the word (accountability) meant that teachers are to be accountable for the respect they show to children, we would rejoice. If it meant that teachers are to be accountable for helping students to find joy in learning and to become lifelong contributors to their society, we would rejoice. If it meant that

> teachers are to be accountable for ensuring that all children are successful and that those teachers will be required to find the means to guide students and to assess students in multiple ways, we would rejoice. . . . If teachers are to be held accountable, will those students who are below average in reading be pushed, mauled, and remediated? Shouldn't we instead tinker with the regular education regimen and get on with the process of educating the child? But that's not what we do. We take children with eyes that won't focus, fingers that won't cooperate, association areas that won't associate, neurons that don't fire appropriately, connections that aren't connected, brains that won't attend and we say, "Sorry, but you must read anyway." (p. 391)

There are many staunch and vocal adversaries among the educational community of the standards approach to reform, but upon closer scrutiny of their objections, their argument seems most often to be with high-stakes testing rather than with standards-based school reform efforts. Should the baby (well-written standards that embrace the notion of pluralism rather than one-size-fits-all instruction) be thrown out with the dirty bath water (high-stakes, standardized testing that straightjackets teaching and learning) to move past this nationwide dilemma? Opinions vary widely about this issue, too.

Defenders of the standards movement point out that judging student performance against a standard is indeed a better practice than the alternatives—comparing students' work with other students' performance or the practice of teachers simply shooting from the hip in grading and scoring. "Those who wish for the abandonment of standards," contends Douglas Reeves (2001), Director of the Center for Performance Assessment in Denver, Colorado, "should ask themselves whether the days of the bell curve is really the alternative they prefer" (p. 6). Without question, identifying and working toward standards is a process commonly associated with outstanding performers, in all walks of life and in most types of organizations.

The primary problem—albeit not the only one—with the accountability and standards movement is undoubtedly how it is being interpreted and managed by forcing the companion use of high-stakes testing of students as the sole means of assessing

mastery of the standards. "The standards movement's preoccupation with measurement is one of its most troubling aspects," observe Bohn and Sleeter (2000, p. 157). They go on to state:

> Standardizing "output" measurements tends to lead people toward standardizing "inputs" and framing human variation as a problem to be contained. In the case of schools, the "input" that the movement toward standardization leads educators to standardize is the curriculum; the rich human variations of children and of pluralism then become problems to be minimized. (p. 157)

Having standards should not be misinterpreted to mean standardizing the educational experience for all students. Quite the contrary should be true; one primary purpose for having standards should be to enhance the personalization of education for students to facilitate their academic success. Any such movement to reform schools to better serve children should have from the outset an approach that is consistent with what we know is likely to help them. Using the learner-centered lens formed by the psychological principles of teaching and learning (refer to Chapter 7 in this volume) make excellent criteria through which all proposed policies and practices should be scrutinized.

Common sense, if nothing more, should inform us of the utter insanity and counterproductivity of many of the shortsighted strategies for improving students' test scores that are often used in schools today. McCloskey and McMunn (2000) explain:

> Interestingly, strategies designed primarily to familiarize students with the test may not translate into real learning gains. . . . The fact that some schools are implementing short-term test-preparation strategies as their primary response to high-stakes tests suggests that perhaps school capacity for taking on long-term instructional reform is not where it needs to be if high-stakes testing is going to translate into meaningful and thoughtful strategies for improved learning at the classroom level. (p. 119)

"Where high-stakes tests are being imposed by states, it has thrown many teachers and students into a state of anxiety,"

observes John Merrow (2001, p. 657). And educators are not alone in their anxiety about these standards and tests. Weekly reports of parents and students protesting these high-stakes tests have sprung up all over the nation (e.g., well-attended, formal protests against state-mandated tests occurred in May, 2001, in New York and Boston). In understanding the standards movement, a distinction must be made between it and the movement toward high-stakes testing. In writing about what he calls the twin movements, Scott Thompson (2001) makes important distinctions between what he terms the authentic (standards-based reform) and the evil (high-stakes, test-based reform) twins. Table 8.1 summarizes important differences that exist between the two reform movements, which should be understood more clearly, especially by educational leaders (Ciliberto, 2001; Reeves, 2001; Stiggins, 1997).

Janie Ray Smith (2001) attempts to make sense of the confusion around standards-based education and high-stakes testing and concludes that when handled well, standards can be used to improve teaching and learning. Like Thompson, Ciliberto, Stiggins, and others who find hope in the standards-based reform movement, however, Smith contends that only when "schools are committed to standards-based instruction through a systemic, long-term process" will standards be usefully employed and make a positive impact on teaching and learning (p. 4). When based on quick fixes and the test, the standards movement will quickly fail, concede Smith and most other standards advocates. Among the greatest good coming from the standards movement to date in school districts that have tackled standards-based reform from a systemic, all-encompassing perspective, suggests Smith (2001), are better analysis and use of data to make instructional decisions, better forms of reliable and varied performance assessments, and strides in reaching all children more equitably, especially special populations. These results are, indeed, promising, but practices that led to these good results in a number of districts cited by Smith are more the exception than the rule.

Just what is the business of school? Determining what schools are and are not responsible for in a child's education, and what they can and cannot reasonably do, is essential for making schools truly accountable. Schlechty (1990) asserts that the primary business of school is to "produce schoolwork that will engage the young to the point that they try it, stick with it, and succeed at it"

Table 8.1 Differences Between Standards-Based Reform and High-Stakes Testing

Authentic Standards-Based Reform Movement	*High-Stakes Testing Movement*
Fundamentally concerned with equity and high expectations for all students and staff	Focused on testing to sort and track, reward and punish
Most interested in evidence of improvement	Most concerned about current student performance, test scores
Complex and based on multiple forms of monitoring and assessing students' academic progress	Overly simplistic in equating student achievement to performance on a single test; abusive, inappropriate use of standardized tests
Focused on improving quality of curriculum and instruction for all students, in all schools	Focused on quickly derived, quantifiable, annual test scores that are easily reported and understood by politicians and the public
Focused on facilitating all students' success	Focused on measuring, ranking, and sorting schools and students
Involves teachers, parents, and others as active participants in developing and refining standards	Tests written by "experts" used as single indicators of students' degree of success, thus making them the standards
Describes what children should be learning	Defines the scores that students and schools must make to pass
Requires heavy investment in professional development of teachers and administrators to facilitate improved teaching and learning	Emphasizes drill and kill in classrooms to help children score well on tests
Requires provision of intensive help for students, rather than merely penalizing some of them for their at-risk potential	Focuses on test taking to the neglect of learning, particularly in the spring just before testing
Requires schools to operate as collaborative communities of learners, focused on problem solving, reflection, and dialogue as primary means for continuous growth and development of everyone in the school	Often requires teaching and learning to take second place to practice sessions in preparation for the annual test
Emphasizes complex learning, which is not easily tested	Encourages a focus on isolated skills and low-level, easily tested objectives

(p. 141). This primary business takes place in classrooms where the most pertinent indicators of a school's accountability and authentic evidences of student achievement exist.

FOCUSING ON CLASSROOMS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT

What strategies are there besides high-stakes, standardized tests for assessing standards and holding students and educators accountable? What role should school leaders play, what can principals and teacher leaders do right here and now, to minimize the potential damage to schools and students in this nationally debated scenario? What's a good instructional leader to do to make the best of the testing situation today without giving in to bad practices and contributing to the problem?

To assess how well a school is doing in a truly accountable fashion, Eisner (2001), like Schlechty, Kohn, and other seasoned, credible educators, suggests we look carefully in classrooms and examine closely the kinds of activities children are involved in and ask questions, such as the following:

- What is the educational significance of the content students encounter?
- How well are students able to pose meaningful questions, rather than solve problems?
- What connections are students helped to make between what they study in school and the world outside?
- What opportunities do students have to formulate their own purposes and to design ways to achieve them?
- What opportunities do children have to work cooperatively on problems they deem important?
- To what extent are students able to work in depth in domains that relate to their unique abilities and aptitudes?
- Do students participate in assessment of their own work?
- Are teachers given the time to observe and work with one another?
- Are parents helped to understand what their child has accomplished in class? (pp. 370-372)

These are quality-oriented, legitimate—albeit less quantifiable—criteria for judging a school's accountability. Such quality-related questions for determining a school's accountability are about looking at what's happening with students and teachers in the school—rather than narrowly focusing on an end-product in the form of standardized test scores—as authentic, insightful indicators of how well a school is ensuring that children are learning.

School leaders can be a viable force in taking the initiative to focus on more credible classroom-based evidences of students' achievement, which cover many dimensions of human development not assessed well on such tests, thereby preventing the abuse of standardized, machine-scored tests as the sole or even the primary measure of children's—and thus the schools'—accomplishments. Being appropriately accountable for students' learning requires schools to monitor their performance and analyze well-selected data; it does not translate into annual test results on which students' presumed achievement, and thus educators' accountability, must primarily rest. Reeves (2001) addresses this issue specifically:

> The participants in the increasingly vituperative debate on standards and assessments are missing the point. They throw their rhetorical missiles at one another, unencumbered by the evidence and focused on a particularly vexing conundrum: the relationship of standards to a single high-stakes test. Advocates demand accountability and opponents demand fairness, but neither side appears to be willing to shift the focus of the debate from an annual test event in the gymnasium to the primary location for effective assessment: the classroom. (p. 5)

John Franklin (2001) suggests, "Good assessment should be thought of as a photo album rather than a snapshot." He continues, "We should use different pictures and different lenses to get at different aspects of learning over time" (p. 8). The performance of students over time in the classroom—not a few hours spent once a year taking a test—is the obvious place to focus on credible and varied ways of determining (e.g., multiple-choice tests, portfolios of student work that contain concrete examples of children's progress over time, multiple forms of students' actual performances)

what children are and are not learning. Reeves (2001) sagely suggests, "The key to effective assessment is balance" (p. 8). Locally developed, more reliable, varied assessments of students' performance for multiple purposes helps administrators and teachers become better informed about student achievement. "District designed performance assessments and thoughtfully designed classroom assessments can enable educators to have multiple measurements to determine achievement toward standards, to guide instruction, and to assess individual student needs" (Smith, 2001, p. 5).

An important dimension of classroom assessment is the significance of student-teacher interaction that is essential for finding out most specifically and reliably how well individual students are learning. Through regular and prompt feedback from teachers and each other, students have the greatest opportunity to grow, learn, and improve their performance. After all, the aim is improving learning, not measuring it. "A primary leadership responsibility of any principal is to provide opportunities for their teachers to learn to embed effective classroom assessment in the teaching and learning process" (Stiggins, 2001, p. 19). Teachers must have opportunities to learn and improve their assessment practices as an integral part of improving instruction. Principals and district administrators should facilitate ongoing professional development opportunities designed specifically to include student assessment practices.

In a *Phi Delta Kappan* article, Black and Wiliam (1998) report strong research evidence of the link between what happens in classrooms (particularly with assessment) and student achievement. These authors raise important questions for policymakers in their quest for raising standards and making schools more accountable:

> In terms of systems engineering, present policies in the U.S. and in many other countries seem to treat the classroom as a black box. . . . But what is happening inside the box? How can anyone be sure that a particular set of new inputs will produce better outputs if we don't at least study what happens inside? And why is it that most of the reform initiatives . . . are not aimed at giving direct help and support to the work of teachers in the classroom? (p. 140)

Black and Wiliam (1998) offer their concrete, research-based responses to improving formative assessment in classrooms:

1. Feedback to any pupil should be about the particular qualities of his or her work, with advice on what he or she can do to improve, and should avoid comparisons with other pupils;
2. If formative assessment is to be productive, pupils should be trained in self-assessment so that they can understand the main purposes of their learning and thereby grasp what they need to do to achieve;
3. Opportunities for pupils to express their understanding should be designed into any piece of teaching, for this will initiate the interaction through which formative assessment aids learning;
4. The dialogue between pupils and a teacher should be thoughtful, reflective, focused to evoke and explore understanding, and conducted so that all pupils have an opportunity to think and to express their ideas;
5. Feedback on tests, seatwork, and homework should give each pupil guidance on how to improve, and each pupil must be given help and an opportunity to work on the improvement. (pp. 142-146)

These authors conclude their suggestions by acknowledging the critical role a teacher's beliefs about learning and each child's potential to learn plays in the child's chances of academic success. Indeed, a teacher's positive expectations for students' learning must be in tact for other teaching strategies to be effective.

It is one thing to be responsibly accountable and to have ideals, goals, and some benchmarks in the form of standards to facilitate educators in their pursuit of quality assurances that students are getting a good, equitable slice of the nation's education pie. It is quite another to treat the standards as empirically derived or sanctioned by Divinity. Today's standards are not passed down from Moses or written in stone. Nor is it written in anyone's book of right living that educators should be held any more

accountable for students' achievement than their families, communities, peers, legislators, and society in general. Paul Houston (2001), current executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, contends:

> It takes a village to raise achievement. . . . [I]f we are to truly be a nation where the children of poverty are able to run alongside the children of privilege, then a total strategy and a commitment by all is needed. The village must be galvanized to action. (p. 46)

Commissioner of New York State Education Department Richard Mills (2001) reminds us of the importance of staying focused on children and not letting the distractions get us off course or demoralized. He, too, suggests educators prepare not to have all the answers but to ask the hard questions that lead the whole community to more serious thought about issues. He encourages educators to insist and persist by emphasizing the right things and by repeatedly retelling the tale because the public, board members, and state legislatures are forever changing and have short memories. "We shouldn't play along with those who want us to stand there with all the answers," he warns. "How can we close the gaps in student achievement right here in our community? Now that's a question for parents, educators, students, everyone" (p. 40).

Finally, in dealing accountably with standards and tests, like any other practice, it is absolutely necessary to remember that at the heart of this education enterprise is the well-being of children . . . as individuals, first and foremost, not as collective groups of students whose test scores yield data for making comparisons, rating schools', teachers', and principals' performances and giving politicians campaign fodder. Any practice that clouds or pulls us too much from that central mission is badly flawed. Leadership for instructional excellence wears the "lens" of student-centeredness, attempting to interpret all practice in light of what is best for students in dealing with the tough issues that challenge educators today, not the least of which is today's accountability movement with its emphasis on standards and high-stakes testing.

Pointers for the Principal

→ Don't dodge accountability.

- ➢ Actively assume responsibility for the school's role in student learning.
- ➢ Facilitate conversations about accountability among all stakeholders.
- ➢ Lead stakeholders to define who is responsible and for what in a child's education.
- ➢ Know the national, state, and local perspectives on schools and accountability.
- ➢ Embrace standards that support pluralism among teachers and learners.
- ➢ Resist high-stakes, standardized testing as the major means of assessing students' performance and thus a school's accountability.
- ➢ Assertively monitor, document, and report through multiple means how well students are learning.

→ Know what educators and students are actually doing in the school.

- ➢ Be vigilant about the quality of activities and interactions in the school.
- ➢ Be keenly aware of activities in which students and teachers are routinely engaged.
- ➢ Participate regularly in dialogues about the quality of school life.
- ➢ Assist teachers, parents, and students in assuming appropriate, active roles.
- ➢ Lead the school in the practice of asking in-depth questions, especially about what's happening in classrooms.

→ Make assessment more authentic and representative of students' achievement.

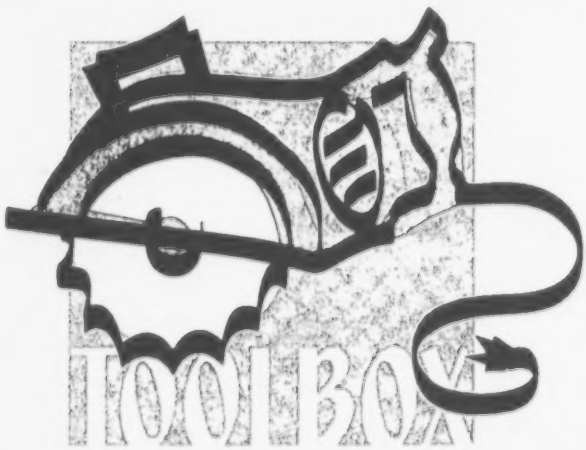
- ➢ Facilitate a multifaceted approach to assessing student performance.
- ➢ Understand and use standardized tests scores appropriately—as only one of multiple indicators of student performance.

- ➢ Encourage and support teachers' efforts to improve classroom assessment.
- ➢ Keep parents informed and involved in monitoring the progress of students.
- ➢ Report regularly to the board and community on varied indicators of student progress, both positive and negative.
- ➢ Based on students' performance, adapt school's goals for improvement.

CHAPTER NINE

The Instructional Leader's Power Tools

Cutting-Edge Leadership Strategies



Districts need to start fixing their sights on the schools they want to build, rather than maintaining the schools they have.

—Neuman and Pelchat (2001, p. 736).

Failure to discipline shared decisions by results means that the decisions will be disciplined by reference to the interests

of factions, groups, and parties, rather than the interests of children.

—Phillip C. Schlechty (1990, p. 62).

Data for making informed decisions and reporting objectives are essential to the operation and leadership of the profession.

—Marlin L. Tanck (1994, p. 92).

The administrator can serve as instructional leader as data-driven decision-making and instructional leadership go hand in hand.

—Theodore B. Creighton (2001a, p. 11).

Innovations that have been succeeding have been doing so because they combine good ideas with good implementation decision and support systems.

—Michael G. Fullan (1995, p. 113).

A systems approach to effective behavioral and instructional support requires the use of data or evidence to support decision-making.

—U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (2000, pp. 5–6).

Research, experimentation, and data gathering are built into the daily routine of learning organizations.

—Taher A. Razik and Austin D. Swanson (2001, p. 454).

- ❑ Leader as Architect of Change
- ❑ Putting Data to Work
- ❑ Tapping Into the Power of Technology

The only thing constant is change itself. We've all heard it. We all know it at some level, but most of us operate primarily from a change-resistant mentality. The literature is replete with issues of change and its impact on us as individuals, families, groups, and society at large. For some time now, our society has made much ado about the increasing fast rate of change in our world and its impact on everything from rushed children, stress levels, and heart attacks to the way organizations must now operate and be led to remain relevant and on the cutting edge. Processes such as long-range and strategic planning, forecasting, and even visionary leadership have been very much about the necessity of organizations to deal with phenomenal changes taking place at record-breaking speeds. Before a textbook reaches the classroom, much of its content is obsolete. Curricula at all levels, including preparation programs for teachers and administrators, must peddle faster to approach relevancy in what was already deemed an outmoded, stuck-in-the-mud endeavor. Before a piece of technology is installed and operable, a newer, improved model is on the market. It is no wonder that the traditional model of principal as one who simply "puts out fires" or keeps from "rocking the boat" is no longer adequate for today's schools. How does today's principal protect the organization from the potential havoc change can wreak? Or, better yet, can change actually be a principal's friend? Are there ways to capitalize on change phenomena to facilitate teaching and learning and school improvement processes?

This chapter offers principals a critical set of up-to-date yet well-documented and essential power tools for dealing with change, so they can provide leadership at its cutting-edge best. These tools include (1) having a perspective on change that is proactive and positive, (2) understanding the processes fundamental to dealing with data and using it and research more competently in making decisions and driving reform initiatives focused on improving teaching and learning, and (3) maximizing technology as a power tool for managing data and facilitating school improvement.

LEADER AS ARCHITECT OF CHANGE

Effective principals today do more than manage organizations. To be their best, and in many cases now even to survive, they must be leaders who get their impetus and power from empowering others, tapping talent throughout the school community, and mobilizing teams and structures for participatory leadership from among the entire spectrum of stakeholders. A primary distinction between management and leadership is that management suggests maintenance of the status quo. Leadership, on the other hand, is all about effecting change. Organizations that thrive and are healthy are frequently referred to as learning organizations, characterized by continual growth and renewal among all school community members for improvement.

Today's school leader must be an effective agent of change, with skills to facilitate the processes essential for the organization and its people to continue to improve. But more than this, to be most effective, today's principal must view change as an opportunity to redirect and fine-tune the organization in its mission to care for and educate children. An attitude that embraces change's positive potentials, skills that capitalize on and steer change for school improvement, and an understanding of the complexities of how change occurs in people and organizations equip a principal to move beyond being able to cope with change to being empowered as a change-shaper to accomplish the school's purposes.

Attitude Adjustment: Embracing Change

The literature is replete with opinions on what it takes to be a great leader (Covey, 1991; Fullan, 1995; Goldberg, 2001). Although the ingredients for outstanding leadership offered by various authors often vary, most include references to the capacity of great leaders for dealing with change and making change work for them, rather than merely coping with change as though it were an adversarial, event-oriented phenomenon. Such an attitude is critical to making the most of change and leading a school, rather than tentatively addressing, enduring, or coping with change. This is an important distinction that outstanding leaders understand and on which they base a positive view of change as a tool for facilitating outstanding school improvement.

If an organization is not improving, then it most likely is getting worse. There is no static state of existence for human beings, organisms, or organizations. Try as we humans may, we cannot stop change. The best we can do is to understand that change is, after all, what keeps life interesting by giving us repeated opportunities to grow and giving us renewed hope and optimism for a better tomorrow.

The key for principals, teachers, parents, and community members is to funnel the constant change into an ever-improving state of being for the entire learning community, the organization of school. Being proactive and anticipating change, rather than always having to respond or react to it, helps a school shape its destiny by channeling its energy into attaining its goals and mission.

> Change begins with a new way of thinking—it starts in the hearts and minds of individuals and results in seeing learning and learners differently. . . . Like learning, change is a lifelong and continuous process. (Presidential Task Force on Psychology in Education & American Psychological Association, 1993, p. 56)

Key Skills of a Change Agent

Effective leaders do not facilitate change and improve schools alone. A major role for the principal is to involve the school's stakeholders in meaningful, leaner-centered school improvement processes. A pivotal function for today's principal is involving everyone in continuous school improvement initiatives, most of which have been dealt with in this text. Work-study groups and multidirectional communication conduits provide the fundamental structures for schools to be learning organizations and for change to be embedded in the culture of their everyday operations. Principals and school leaders set these conduits and systems of communication in motion, thereby empowering others to be a part of continuous improvement in accomplishing the school's central role of educating young people.

Another skill of today's change-agent principal is the ability to facilitate a change-friendly culture of risk taking and innovation to advance learning and success for everyone. According to Schwahn and Spady (1998),

> Cultural leaders know that real change happens from the inside out, with the paradigm of perspectives, beliefs, values, and goals of the individual. . . . [W]ith a new perspective and a safe place to explore change, individuals can participate in a process with confidence that it will "work" for them. (p. 77)

Supervision and evaluation practices that are conceived as primarily supportive and cooperative endeavors help to ensure such confidence and nurture the risk-taking spirit so integral to growth and improvement among faculty and staff.

Understanding change as a process, not an event, is essential for principals as well as teachers and other stakeholders involved in today's inclusive-oriented, participatory style of school leadership espoused in this text and widely accepted in organizational thinking universally. Change, viewed more authentically as a process, can be broken down into stages or phases. Understanding these stages helps those involved in such processes to understand change's complexities, thereby minimizing the frustrations that often accompany change. Predicting, for example, that during the implementation of a new strategy or program some stakeholders will be frustrated at first by their awkwardness with the innovation can enable educators to prepare for better support systems and backup plans to assist with such anticipated problems. Such proaction reduces anxiety and lowers frustration levels, which, in turn, pave the way for a change effort's success and greater acceptance of future innovation and change.

Understanding the Complexity of Change

This text does not attempt to deal comprehensively with the complex concept of change. Leaders should read widely on this topic to continue to add to their understanding of change and its complexities as interpreted by varied thinkers. Two dimensions of change are pinpointed as essential understandings that school leaders must have if they are intent on improving teaching and learning in their schools: (1) extensive knowledge and understanding of the complexity of change and its predictable stages and (2) the determination and skill to channel most change initiatives and resources toward what is happening in the classroom.

Throughout the extensive literature on change, its process is often described as a set of critical stages through which those involved in the innovation must pass. Although the labels and terms for the phases differ, basically the following are included in most models of change as process:

- *Awareness or readiness*—the importance of all individuals involved in the change initiative to understand the need to change
- *Preparation*—exploring and learning more about the change initiative and how it will apply both to the school community collectively and to each individual specifically
- *Implementation*—practicing new behaviors and skills and adapting to change
- *Refinement*—routinizing a practice, assessing it, and improving on it

Of course, schools do not neatly deal with one change at a time. Change is happening at many different levels all around us. Various ones of these four change stages are operative at any one time in our personal lives, at work, in the community, and in society at large. Even though this change process is easily discerned in all phases of our lives and has been dealt with intellectually and well covered in the professional literature for some time now, few folks give it the credence that it deserves when dealing with change or innovation, particularly in school reform and improvement. I see school district after school district attempting to make rather dramatic change but giving short shrift to change as a process by attempting to treat it as an event—a workshop, most often, with little to no support or follow-up in the implementation stages in the classrooms, where it counts most. Understanding that change is, indeed, a process that typically will occur in predictable stages can enable administrators to plan ahead for providing adequately the resources to support continuous school improvement.

If the purpose of change in a district or school is as it should be—to improve teaching and learning—then there must be a stronger recognition of the complexity of changing classroom practices. "You can make all the changes you want at the state level, but nothing is going to happen unless change takes place at

the classroom and school levels," members of the Southern Regional Education Board in their publication on school accountability caution (1998, p. 13). And how does this change occur? The whetstone of school improvement is most certainly well-conceived staff development. "Indeed," asserts Schlechty (1990), "human resource development becomes the linchpin upon which all improvement efforts are based" (p. 139). Effective leaders understand this and work fearlessly and tenaciously to ensure that this linchpin to change and improvement is not short-changed. Embracing change as an ongoing, productive process, skillfully nurturing a change-friendly culture, and knowing about and planning for the complexities of change with an emphasis on professional development as change's linchpin are an instructional leader's tools for maximizing change that is focused on improving teaching and learning.

PUTTING DATA TO WORK

Instructional leaders must depend on systematic, varied data and up-to-date research to guide their decisions and strategies for continual improvement and accountability for what's happening in their schools and how well students are achieving. "Without good information, an organization is blind to its past achievements and failures and to its future potential" (Razik & Swanson, 2001, p. 453). Information on both process and product is absolutely essential to direct change and maximize improvement efforts focused on teaching and learning. For example, although it is important, it simply isn't enough to know that third-grade students are not performing well in mathematics. In addition to the need to know more specifically which mathematical processes and functions are in question, it is imperative to know which students are performing well and which are not and what's happening with mathematics instruction in classrooms (instructional approaches, curriculum, materials, schedule) to make sound decisions for change. The Southern Regional Education Board (1998) concludes:

> Most teachers have little experience in using data to determine where improvements are needed. Assistance . . . should ensure that teachers know what is expected, how to use

> performance data to identify problem areas, and how to develop and carry out a successful plan of action. Without this focus the school is unlikely to continue progressing toward high standards. (p. 25)

Data-driven decisions and research-based strategies must be more than the stuff about which articles are written if school leadership is ever to be instructionally focused. Understanding what data is important, the multiple sources of relevant data, alternative methods of accessing and analyzing data, as well as using the results to make sound decisions are all important aspects of maximizing data to improve teaching and learning. "School leaders," assert Hoyle, English, and Steffy (1994), "must be skilled at interpreting and conducting research, evaluating programs, and planning for the future. Each skill is dependent on the other and must be mastered" (p. 246). Nor does data analysis have to be complex. Theodore B. Creighton, associate professor of educational leadership at Sam Houston State University and author of *Schools and Data: The Educator's Guide for Using Data to Improve Decision Making* (2001b), explains:

> Statistics is not advanced mathematics. The majority of statistical analyses useful to administrators can be completed with a basic understanding of mathematics and is more conceptual than requiring complex calculations. . . . Data analysis in schools involves the collection of data and the use of available data to improve teaching and learning. . . . Rather than complex statistical formulas and tests, it is generally simple counts, averages, percentages and rates that we are interested in. (pp. 7-8)

Existing findings based on research studies and what other schools and districts have learned about programs and strategies are also important sources of data for making informed, cogent decisions for improving teaching and learning. To ignore what others are doing and what is in the research literature on teaching and learning is not only inefficient and much like trying to re-invent the wheel, it is irresponsible and unprofessional.

Skillful collection, storage, analysis, and use of data and routinely examining up-to-date research are power tools for

change because data and research provide information that enables educators to make the most of their time, resources, and improvement initiatives by streamlining strategies to meet most particularly the specific needs of their students. In short, a comprehensive system of information management is needed for a school to deal most competently with and maximally use the wealth of data pertinent to good school leadership. Skillfully dealing with data should result in the formation of an information management system, which includes a more regulated, formalized approach to accessing and collecting data; analyzing data; and being able to use and report data more easily and accurately via the development of multiple databases and a user-friendly, school data synopsis—a school profile.

Accessing and Collecting Data

What data are important to collect and include in school decision making and improvement? Data are needed to answer what's in place, what's working, what are our goals, and how we improve student achievement (U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, 2000, p. 6). Bernhardt's (1998, p. 15) four classifications of the data important for schools to collect to make sound decisions for student achievement provide a useful framework for thinking about data, its sources, and its types. Bernhardt's data classifications include demographic data, perceptual data, data on student learning, and data related to school programs and processes. Thinking of data in these clusters helps to put large quantities of data into a more manageable system that has a wide spectrum of relevant information from which to draw and on which to base decisions.

Demographic data include information on students, such as name, gender, ethnicity, special needs, age, grade, attendance, socioeconomic characteristics, educational history, and relevant family and contact information. Demographic data related to the faculty and community are also important to have. Much of this information is objective, frequently numerically categorized, and already available somewhere in most school districts. Using the data more effectively requires first putting it into an easily accessed data bank in the school.

Student learning data include standardized, norm-referenced, as well as criterion-referenced test data, teacher observations, and

an array of more informal classroom assessments. If accountability for students' achievement is ever to depend on more than standardized test scores, educators must collect, use, and actively promote a broader range of data as better, more authentic representations of student performance. More important, instructional decisions cannot be most responsive to students' needs without such data being collected continuously and used throughout the school's daily operation and decision-making processes.

Perceptual data is important because of its impact on learning. The values, beliefs, and attitudes of learners, teachers, parents, and community members are strong influences on the school's culture, the learning environment, and, ultimately, student performance. This set of data is more subjective and more difficult to quantify. Yet it must not be excluded from a school's database for reflecting and making good decisions about students and learning. Much of it must be collected via questionnaires, surveys, interviews, and understandings gleaned from carefully attending the behaviors, the language, and feedback from students, parents, and community members. "What data shows our commitment or if our classes are exciting, creative places?" asks George Goens (2001, p. 32), a former superintendent of schools in Wisconsin. Lest one thinks that such qualitative, soft data is less than helpful, he or she needs only to review the research-based, documented principles of learning from Chapter 7 of this book. The importance of perceptions and attitudes to teaching and learning are readily visible throughout these documented principles, this text's recommended lens for making students and learning the focus of the school's total operation.

Finally, the last of Bernhardt's (1998) classifications of data important for schools to collect, analyze, and use in decision making is data related to school processes and programs. Schools have primary control of these constructs when designing to facilitate student achievement. Schools' decision-making processes regarding programs (e.g., curriculum content, materials, projects) and processes (e.g., student-teacher interaction, instruction, collaboration, communication) should be based on thorough analyses of—and continually adapted to—students' achievement and well-being. The effectiveness of these processes and programs should, of course, be reflected ultimately in students' performance. It is important, however, to document more than students'

test scores and to know what is going on in schools and how decisions are made that relate to students' interest as the rationale and guiding compass. In this way, adjustments can be made and processes and programs more routinely examined and accounted for in light of what's happening to students.

Also important in collecting data about programs and processes is accounting for the resources required to implement and maintain them (e.g., personnel, materials, space, time, equipment, professional development). Data about faculty, their special skills and training, and their credentials are important information to have readily available. It is critical as well to analyze programs and processes in terms of cost factors. Too often educators fail to deal as responsibly as they should with the public's tax dollar, and as a result taxpayers are usually suspicious of and reluctant to respond to the school's request for increased funding. Data that help to analyze cost factors related to programs and processes initiated by the school are essential to making decisions that can be justified on the bases of both effectiveness and efficiency issues.

The case was made in Chapter 8 of this book for accountability criteria to include processes and programs that are most often within the purview of the school as an important component for school-based accountability. Also acknowledged in the last chapter was that accountability for students' achievement does not rest solely with the school; it belongs to the "village." What is happening in the school in the way of processes and programs to facilitate the school's role in students' learning, however, is highly relevant accountability criteria over which a school and district have infinitely more control and for which they should rightfully be held accountable.

When presented with the question of how he knew if his district's schools were successfully educating children, Superintendent Gary Burton (2001) of Wayland Public Schools in Massachusetts thought of more than test scores, scholarships, and the number of students accepted into universities for substantiating data. He included in his indicators of how well the district was educating its young the ability of the system to recruit and retain outstanding teachers, the good salaries that the community pays its educators as indicators of their commitment to children's education, the near-perfect student attendance rate, the

absence of vandalism on campuses, the few children labeled by the district as troubled, and the high level of parent involvement with the schools from kindergarten through the 12th grade. But most impressive was how he dug even deeper and turned to what he calls true benchmarks of the degree of success of educating children, benchmarks which he admitted were not very measurable: unsolicited letters of praise to the local paper about teachers or students; evidence of community service performed by students; the number of citizens who choose to vote in elections; and, most revealing, how students 10 years beyond graduation have fared with college, jobs, relationships, and with demonstrating a community spirit of giving to and helping others (p. 42).

Truly, the success of the village itself must be the ultimate test of how well America is educating its young—a task that belongs to all of us and for which we should look broadly to access data and monitor our progress. The school's role is to do its best to find measures of its success within its scope of capability and responsibility as only one player, albeit a major one, in the village's education of its young. These measures will most often be more short-term than are most desirable or most authentic in the larger scheme of things. As Burton (2001) has concluded, the real proof is in how children fare in the long run as adults and members of the larger society. Meantime, schools and leaders can at least insist on asking more reflective, deeper questions and forcing the public to look beyond superficial data as measures of a school's accountability in its role in educating children. If student performance is authentically interpreted to include a broad spectrum of indicators chosen by the school's stakeholder community as important and indicative of students' achievement, then schools can be more accountable for how programs and processes within the school are impacting students' learning. It would behoove educators and school stakeholders to systematically collect data related to these admittedly complex, but infinitely more legitimate, indicators of students' achievement.

Analyzing Data

Data collected from the four broad categories identified by Bernhardt (1998) and from sources within and outside the school contexts can then be used to make better, data-based decisions,

rather than knee-jerk responses based on limited or skewed pieces of information or nonapplicable or inappropriate perspectives.

Varied forms of more in-depth analysis of frequently collected, qualitative and quantitative data can be most useful in determining how to improve teaching and learning. "It seems to me," conclude Neuman and Pelchat (2001), "that if we really want to improve the results, then we have to start thinking about how we're teaching, what we're doing in the classroom" (p. 736). Such analysis can provide insight, for example, into who is learning what, to what degree using which program, in which classrooms, and at what costs. Philip Streifer (2001), a former school district superintendent, writes about what he calls a drill-down process useful in taking data apart, much like peeling off layers of an onion. Streifer makes an important point about the danger of taking a too-shallow approach to data and prematurely jumping to conclusions before thorough analysis of it has taken place. He finds three types of data analysis most useful in answering questions that large sets of aggregated data alone will not yield: (1) disaggregation of data across one or more factors, (2) longitudinal analyses over time, and (3) exploring, which he describes as using logic to analyze problems for which there is no clear, predetermined direction to follow. These are practical, responsible tools for digging deeper into data to make better decisions.

Streifer (2001) offers a number of very practical suggestions for schools and districts to consider in developing wholesome processes that support a data-driven environment. The following are adaptations of his recommendations that seem practical and timely for schools and districts to make the most of data available to them:

- Develop data work teams with people who have the expertise to deal with critical areas, such as curriculum, testing, database manipulation, and basic research.
- Give teams adequate time and perhaps even compensation for their work.
- Focus on patterns and trends in the data over time. Armed with diagnostic information gained through drill-down analyses, teams should rely on their judgment and expertise in planning program changes.
- Once the team believes it has identified the root cause of a problem, check the research to avoid reinventing the wheel.

- Build a culture that supports the review and use of data for decision making by including it regularly in the school improvement process, not just when a major problem emerges or the board or local news media asks for a report. (p. 18)

A culture that supports the wise use of good data for making decisions, particularly related to teaching and learning, generally operates from a perspective that includes the following approaches to and attitudes about data:

1. Disaggregate group test results and large sets of district and school data to find out how particular groups are faring (e.g., by class, gender, race, socioeconomic level, program, instructional method).

2. Focus on tracking the progress of children over time more than on comparing one group's scores with another group by looking at how students at each grade level compare to students from past years. Raymond Yeagley (2001), superintendent of the Rochester School Department in New Hampshire, recommends using a unique indentification number to follow a student from kindergarten through 12th grade.

3. Look for patterns of student and teacher performance over time to indicate possible strengths and weaknesses in teaching, programs, and organization.

4. Decide which data is worth collecting and analyzing. Think of data as more than test scores and numerical information. Emphasizing the potential of data to improve the organization, Razik and Swanson (2001) comment,

> Data are to be used to isolate problem areas, to design corrective action, and to identify staff training needs. Data do not have to be of the standard statistical variety, however; the most useful kinds of data are frequently those generated by the employees themselves. (p. 454)

5. Use qualitative data in the form of surveys, opinion polls, interviews, feedback of all sorts from all stakeholders, and informal observations to gain insightful information. The use of varied

data, both soft and hard, formal and informal, formative and summative, is most likely to yield the best, most reliable information.

6. Do not overlook the importance of tracking and analyzing data on administrators, faculty, and staff, as well as students, as an important part of data analysis (e.g., attendance; portfolio development; student achievement; health and fitness; parental feedback; participation in professional growth opportunities, such as school and community activities, leadership, and work study groups).

7. Encourage and support initiatives to assist faculty in becoming skilled and competent in classroom assessment of students' achievement, so they can rely more confidently and competently on these data in making decisions related to teaching and learning and in dealing with parents and community about accountability for children's achievement.

Finally, in thinking about collecting and analyzing various forms of data, it is important not to get lost in a sea of numbers and end-of-year reports and drift from the purpose. Goens (2001) reminds us:

> Schools are sanctuaries for children where they can learn, make mistakes and find out about themselves and the world. When we focus so hard on numbers—test scores, attendance, data—we lose sight of the kids. We're in danger of making major issues minor and minor issues major. (p. 32)

We must look beyond easily accessed hard numbers to data that may not be as readily collected or numerically reportable. Because of the complexity of dealing with such quality-oriented data, it becomes more important for a school to dig deep when using data, to work as a team of stakeholders focused on teaching and learning who seek ways of answering more complex and more authentic questions. The stakeholders should determine for themselves the most important and truest indicators of the quality of their children's educational experiences based on their shared beliefs, school vision, and mission and not get sidetracked by statistical jargon and overly simplistic approaches to measuring student achievement.

Developing a School Profile

It is one thing to collect data well, another to analyze it appropriately, and still another to interpret and maximize its use. In writing about how to capitalize on the data available to schools and districts, Superintendent Raymond Yeagley (2001) contends, "A greater challenge than collecting data is creating a process to transform the data into easily accessible, useful information that staff members will employ for school improvement" (p. 12). One way of handling the various data that Yeagley and a growing number of savvy administrators are using is to develop a data-based picture or profile of the school, which in itself becomes a more user-friendly format for accessing data, making decisions, and reporting school results. In making a case for collecting good data and developing a school profile, Marlin Tanck (1994) contends:

> Data for making informed decisions and reporting objectives are essential to the operation and leadership of the profession. A school data profile can describe the context in which learning occurs, some of the processes that influence learning, and the resulting attitudes, achievement, and performance of students. Such information provides a tool for setting goals, a context for individual classroom planning, and a basis for objective reporting to the public. It is vital to professional competence and accountability. (p. 92)

In the plentiful literature on school improvement processes, a first step often recommended is for stakeholders to develop an accurate and succinct profile of the students and community served by the school. A profile can be created in a number of ways, and many good resources exist to assist a school in using data that oftentimes are already available to develop the profile. Geannie Wells, director of the Center for Accountability Solutions under the auspices of the American Association of School Administrators, writes:

> Through our experience we have found that each district's unique needs will determine which tool is best for them. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. New tools are being developed as we write, and districts should explore other available tools

before making a decision. (quoted in "Software for Data Use," 2001, p. 8)

Web sites of professional organizations such as the American Association of School Administrators (www.aasa.org), the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (www.ascd.org), and the National Staff Development Council (www.nsdc.org) are easily accessed, veritable treasure troves of current information on all types of resources available to school districts. These Web sites frequently include recommendations and reviews of multiple software packages for dealing with data, some of which are offered online free of charge (e.g., Quality School Portfolio, developed by the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing).

Data not already available to the school or district should be collected to form a comprehensive school profile, consisting of at least four major sections:

1. School and community demographics
2. Student performance indicators
3. School resources, programs, processes
4. Perceptual data about the quality of the school from all stakeholders

As expected, these areas parallel the data sources identified by Bernhardt (1998) and described in greater detail earlier in this chapter. Tanck (1994) recommends adding a fifth section containing diagnostic information that supports analysis and planning for a specific school improvement effort (p. 93).

Finally, a sixth component is recommended in creating a powerful, comprehensive school profile—a description of the school culture. Such a section tells the school's story by including those elements that make up the character of the school—the beliefs, values, norms of the school's stakeholders, its traditions, and any significant historical data that may have contributed to shaping the school's culture. The National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE), in its comprehensive work to assist schools

with the implementation of improvement processes, has this to say about the importance and purpose of a school profile:

> The value of a reliable information base cannot be overemphasized. Collection and careful analysis of pertinent information is critical in determining the effectiveness of the existing programs and services in your school. Moreover, the types of data collected for the profile can assist schools in planning and sustaining their school improvement initiatives on behalf of student learning. . . . In short, the school's profile should provide a purposeful collection of the critical domains of information that tell the story of the school. All or any part of the information contained in the school's profile could be used to create reports for different audiences and may be disseminated in conventional ways, such as printed reports, or alternative ways, such as the school's Internet Web site. (Fitzpatrick, 1998, pp. 1-2)

Thus, although the profile is created from the collection and analysis of data from the six domains, it then becomes a data source itself for more accessible, easy-to-interpret information for making decisions about teaching and learning and for sharing information about the school and students with others. The collaborative, developmental process for creating a school profile is valuable as an end itself; however, the profile as a product is indeed a powerful tool for reporting to various audiences and for further directing the school's goals and objectives and in planning most appropriately for instruction.

Research-Based, Data-Driven Decision Making

Too many bandwagons and panaceas to cure education's ills have diffused and distracted efforts toward more serious, painstaking reform needed by many of our country's schools in the past 20 years. The this-too-shall-pass mentality that often hinders legitimate school improvement efforts is primarily the result of educators' falling prey to claims of quick fixes for problems that, in reality, require substantial work and for which there are few, if any, shortcuts. If experience is not a sufficient lesson, then even a modicum of understanding about the dimensions of change

should prevent principals and teachers from being so duped by greedy charlatans who flock to feed off the reform frenzy with their dubious ware—the latest fad or fantasy. Research about change is replete with validation of what it takes to impact the classroom and substantially improve teaching and learning. School practices that have proved most effective are based on sound principles and validated by strong research:

> The adoption of effective practices that are based on trustworthy research can be enormously difficult for schools because the temptation is to adopt fads that overemphasize ease and social or emotional appeal. These fads lack empirical evidence of their effectiveness and are based on invalid theoretical tenets. . . . An essential feature of the implementation of research-based practices is that data on student performance must be collected frequently and reliably to monitor the fidelity of the implementation . . . and the effectiveness of the practice. (U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, 2000, p. 5)

Systematically collecting and analyzing data related to programs and student achievement is a critically important dimension of what the literature calls practitioner-oriented, action-based research. Once a program or intervention based on reliable, research-validated practices in the field is adopted, then it becomes the school's responsibility to monitor that program during its implementation for the following purposes:

- To provide a support system to assist faculty and staff with the new practice
- To ensure that what is identified as essential features of the new program are indeed being implemented as prescribed by the program
- To follow closely the progress of children
- To make reasonable adaptations that meet the unique needs of students and teachers involved, yet do not violate the program's essential features or sound educational practices

Throughout this text, the importance of participatory decision making is emphasized. The degree of success of a new

program's implementation is highly correlated to the degree of teacher participation in the decision-making process that leads to its adoption. The research on educational change is clear about the importance of stakeholders being involved from the start in innovation that hinges on their acceptance and implementation skill. "Educational change depends on what teachers do and think—it's as simple and as complex as that," writes Michael Fullan (1982, p. 107).

As teachers and administrators, parents, and community members work together to improve teaching and learning, it is important for them to look for sound, research-validated practices and programs to adopt. It is also important, once an innovation is implemented, to conduct a school's own action research by closely monitoring and supporting individuals as they become more skilled and acclimated to new practices and programs, by collecting data that can be used to make responsible, additional decisions about the adaptation and use of the new program, and by analyzing the data related to student success (what is working, what is not, and with whom), as well as related costs over time for responsible, objective evaluation of the degree of the program's overall worth and effectiveness. Assistant Principal Eileen Greenspun (2001) contends:

> Unless we do serious research and look carefully at results we are doomed to mediocrity. Let's do things like account for halo effects, do cost-benefit analyses, and try to stop selling the next best thing without looking carefully at it. (p. 644)

These research-oriented practices are absolutely essential to educators' accountability and well within the capability and scope of their responsibility.

TAPPING INTO THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY

"Because educational institutions are an integral part of the information industry, the remarkable advances in information and communication technologies hold enormous potential for revolutionizing schooling," claim Razik and Swanson (2001), who

further state, "To date, however, that potential is largely unrealized" (p. 456). It is no secret that most schools lag behind most organizations in capitalizing on the multiple benefits of the wide array of technology available—computers, instructional television, videocassette recorders and cameras, interactive media, and distance learning. Today's technology has the potential for improving schools; it is multifaceted and has the power to totally transform schools as we know them. The following are uses of today's technology that improve schools most dramatically:

- *Data management*—This might include anything from collection and storage, analysis and interpretation, to reporting varied data on students, staff, budgets, facilities, and materials.
- *Communicating, networking, connecting, marketing*—Technology for communication can include communication among all stakeholders within and outside of the school and with other communities of learners both near and far away (e.g., other schools, parents, museums, libraries, community resources).
- *Professional development*—Administrators, faculty, and staff can share ideas via the Internet and e-mail, participate in distance learning, and form study groups made up of local, state, national, and even global members.
- *Instruction*—Technology can be used not just as an add-on to traditional forms of instruction but as a useful delivery tool to provide alternatives that improve access to and quality of instruction for all students by matching the needs of the child and the learning objective to the most powerful instructional medium.
- *Curriculum management*—Technology can be used to manage goals, objectives, units, time lines, teaching resources, and testing. Curriculum development processes of renewal, enrichment, and updating done with today's technology can be significantly more responsive to the needs of students and to changes necessary for the curriculum to be most relevant and current. Curriculum work facilitated by the power of technology can become most authentic by being approached as a fluid and continuously evolving

process rather than as a product-oriented activity that is static and episodic.

- *Access to up-to-date research and information for staff, parents, and students*—Technology provides ready access to a world of current information from professional organizations, government, schools and districts, and technical and business experts, not to mention immediate access to many individuals, researchers, and original sources.

Public schools must use the power of technology similar to business and industry, which employ new technologies to increase productivity, not as an add-on to the curriculum or a high-tech frill in management processes. Educators should earnestly explore uses of technology that replace certain management and instructional functions of the school in a more effective and cost-efficient manner as a primary responsibility of the profession today.

Finally, with regard to technology's potential, it is important to understand that although equipment considerations consume the lion's share of time, attention, energy, and technology budgets in schools and districts, without well-selected, high-quality software, staff development, and sufficient planning by those who will use the equipment, the equipment's potential will surely go untapped. Even worse, having expensive technology that people do not know how to use or for which there is little or poor software is demoralizing and frustrating to staff and can actually detract from the quality of a school. As with anything new or innovative, education and training in how to use computers and related technology most effectively must be provided and must be ongoing. Such training is expensive, but in the long run it saves time and money by maximizing the potential of the equipment investments. In their recent article on technologies in schools, Schwab and Foa (2001) report on the current state-of-the-art:

> The computer revolution in education continues to gather force. Judging from the media, one would assume that almost every student was learning on the Internet. But what's reported are the innovative examples, the pioneering teachers, and the "wow" potential. The reality is that there are still thousands of schools that have only aging computers in the library or a few newer machines clustered in a

> difficult-to-access computer lab. And even if there are computers in the classroom, there are still many more thousands of teachers who, while they know how to do word processing or even to search the Internet, don't have the slightest clue how to truly integrate technology into their teaching. The problem for educators nationwide is to scale up effective training to reach tens of thousands of teachers quickly. (p. 620)

Tapping the potential of today's technology is no longer an option or a luxury in providing accountable leadership. It is an essential, 21st century power tool that has significant versatility in the hands of a skilled principal and staff in facilitating the school's and community's efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning for each child. Without it, the rhetoric about reaching all children is not likely to move past platitudes, mission statements, and campaign slogans. With technology properly used, schools and communities now have the opportunity to be truly responsive to each child's educational needs. Interestingly, the skilled use of technology holds the most promise for reaching all children and personalizing their school experiences in today's schools. Such is the irony: Technology, which is typically perceived as being cold and impersonal, has the potential to transform schools from formal institutions into warm, inviting learning communities.

In stark contrast to Schwab and Foa's rendition of the state of the technology art in most schools today, Razik and Swanson (2001) offer an exciting view of what they call emerging information age schools that have tapped into the power of technology and have transformed themselves. These new-age schools are ones in which instruction is highly variable and responsive to the needs of the individual learner; the role for teachers is reconceptualized into one of diagnostician, prescriber, motivator, facilitator, evaluator, and adviser; the focus is shifted almost entirely from teaching to learning that is highly prescriptive for each child and is continuous; traditional teaching is but one of many methods; school is viewed as a place of learning but not the center of learning, which is shifted to the student; and learning no longer is defined by time, place, or age but is continuous and supported throughout all segments of society. Razik and Swanson add:

> In an increasingly literate and sophisticated society, ways are being found to meet the unique needs of individual students at current or reduced costs. No longer need these two goals be mutually exclusive. They are being obtained concurrently in a few new schools designed specifically for the information age. These schools (1) place the learner in a role of active participant; (2) restructure the ratio of human and capital inputs in the schooling process, and (3) take advantage of existing information and communication technologies. To make them cost effective, these schools are designed systemically, making the use of instructional technology an integral part of the teaching-learning process. Innovations in pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and school organization are developed simultaneously with innovations in instructional technology. (p. 458)

The power to make this transformation into today's information era is here, knocking at the schoolhouse door, and cramping outmoded approaches to education. Most lacking in our schools and communities are the vision, will, and determination to make the changes that are clearly within our grasp, empowered by the technology available to educators today.

POINTERS FOR THE PRINCIPAL

→ Capitalize on change to improve teaching and learning.

- ➢ Be proactive and try to shape change rather than simply adapt to it.
- ➢ Involve all stakeholders in school improvement initiatives.
- ➢ Encourage well-calculated risks to improve teaching and learning.
- ➢ Prepare stakeholders for the implementation dip (negative impact on student achievement) that frequently occurs in the first year of a new program.
- ➢ Treat change as a complex process, not an event.

- ➢ Plan ahead for the predictable stages people go through in changing.
- ➢ Focus primarily on how change will impact students and learning.

→ Put data to work.

- ➢ Think broadly and gain access to a wide array of pertinent data.
- ➢ Collect qualitative and perceptual data in addition to numerical data.
- ➢ Analyze data using disaggregation and longitudinal profiling.
- ➢ Develop a data-based school profile that can be easily accessed.
- ➢ Train and involve teachers and community in using data to make better decisions.

→ Tap into the power of technology.

- ➢ Use technology to help you put data to work and to dig deeply into it.
- ➢ Maintain user-friendly databases on students, faculty, community.
- ➢ Make technological training an ongoing must for everyone.
- ➢ Transform instruction with technology; infuse the curriculum with technology.
- ➢ Think of technology as an architectural and instructional tool, not as a frill or simply another piece to be added to the patchwork curriculum.

CHAPTER TEN

The Ultimate Leadership Tool

Personal Fitness

The busy principal asks, "How can I afford to take the time for personal fitness?" The wise principal knows, "How can I afford not to?"

- ❑ Investing in Personal Fitness
- ❑ Common Pitfalls of the Principalship
- ❑ Becoming an Administriviator
- ❑ In Conclusion

We all understand too well the metaphor of the plumber's own house having leaky pipes. Education's thrust is taking care of

people. Yet too often educators neglect themselves and their own families in trying to fulfill their professional role as nurturers and care providers. This text's ultimate power can be realized only through the integrated use of the recommended strategies as tools in the strong hands, mind, and heart of a dedicated, caring, ever-developing, personally and professionally fit school leader. None of the tools in this text, not even maximized technology and good use of data, are powerful enough to compensate for a principal who does not feel well, lacks optimism, or is otherwise distracted by the problems often created by personal neglect.

The tools offered in this text for facilitating better instructional leadership are useful only when considered in tandem with each and with the skills of a school leader who is personally fit and equipped with physical, mental, and spiritual stamina. A well-balanced, wholesome lifestyle is essential for the strong work ethic, physical fitness, nurturing spirit, wellspring of optimism, and the eagerness to continue to grow and learn that are required for a principal to lead a school to excellence.

Volumes have been written on how to live a good life. Obviously, because it is easier said (and written about) than done, there are far more how-to books on the subject than there are live role models for us to emulate. Despite the difficulty, leading a balanced life and maintaining one's fitness while in a position as demanding as a school principalship are imperative to providing lasting, excellent leadership. The magnitude of the principal's workload and the significance of the work are simply too great to expect less-than-healthy people to assume them with any degree of competence.

INVESTING IN PERSONAL FITNESS

Personal investments are essential to fitness and the ability to deal optimally with life and work, but this does not always mean spending excessive amounts of time and money on fitness programs, equipment, therapists, and expensive vacations. The most worthwhile personal investments we can make are our daily efforts to develop a healthy lifestyle, which translates into living a well-balanced life. Balance is achieved only if we attend to all aspects of our humanness, which include the following:

- Our physical well-being, which entails the need for proper diet, exercise, and rest
- Our spiritual well-being, which entails the need for reflection and introspection about the meaning of life, this world, and our place in it
- Our social well-being, which entails the need for companionship, love, and wholesome interaction with others
- Our intellectual well-being, which entails the need for learning and mental growth throughout our lives
- Our emotional well-being, which entails the need for us to understand the uniqueness of our psychological makeup and how it influences our interaction with others

What indicators are critical and fundamental to personal well-being? If you've not taken the time or had the will recently to indulge in just one more *Oprah Winfrey* show or read Dr. Phil's or Dr. Laura's take on personal improvement, perhaps the following questions will help you take stock and reflect on what's involved in taking good care of yourself:

❍ *Physical Fitness*

- How many calories do you consume on average in a typical day?
- How nutrition conscious are you? For example, approximately what percentage of your diet is made up of fresh fruits and vegetables?
- How has your weight changed in the past 5, 10, or 15 years?
- How have you adapted your diet and exercise to meet your changing needs during the past 5, 10, or 15 years?
- How often do you engage in some form of moderately rigorous, physical exertion that lasts more than 10 minutes?
- How are your agility and reflexes? How do you keep them sharp?
- When's the last time you tried touching your toes? Doing jumping jacks? Walking at a brisk pace for at least a mile?
- Do you regularly get enough sleep? Do you usually awaken refreshed?

- Do you have at least one physical checkup annually? What's your average blood pressure?
- Do you pay sufficient attention to your personal grooming?

❍ *Emotional and Social Fitness*

- How easily do you get frustrated, upset, or angry?
- Are you able to cope with life's ups and downs and maintain an even keel most of the time?
- Are you optimistic about solving problems and the goodness of humankind?
- When's the last time you took at least a week's vacation with your family?
- When's the last time you had a whole weekend devoted solely to family, hobbies, and relaxation?
- How hooked are you on TV and cell phones?
- What do you do to unwind that completely removes you from your work?
- How regularly do you indulge in your own personal interests and those of your family?
- How many really good friends do you have? How often do you socialize with them?
- Do you have a network of mutually supportive others in your life?
- How satisfied are you with your relationships with loved ones (spouse, children, friends, neighbors, relatives)?
- How good do you feel about yourself and your appearance?

❍ *Intellectual Fitness*

- What's the most recent book you've read?
- What new something have you learned to do in the past year?
- Do you actively seek ways to increase your mental abilities (memory, alertness, perception, openness)?
- How well can you concentrate and focus your attention on in-depth, complex tasks?
- How easily distracted are you?
- Do you seek (or avoid) challenges to continue learning and growing?

- Do you usually see change as a threat or as an opportunity for growth and development?
- Are you afraid of problems or do you accept them as a way of life and learn to hone your problem-solving skills as a major key to living well?

❍ *Spiritual Fitness*

- How do you replenish your inner sources of strength and resilience?
- On what do you rely for regular spiritual renewal?
- How often do you reflect on the things in life that mean most to you?
- Do your use of time and your behaviors reflect your values?
- How well can you articulate your philosophy of life?
- Can people recognize your philosophy by how you live?
- What are your life priorities? Are they evident in the way you live?
- Do you spend your time and energy on the things that you cherish most?
- What are your strongest sources of personal motivation?
- How satisfied are you with the way you feel and how you live your life?

COMMON PITFALLS OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP

Do not be discouraged or misled. The position of school principal can be one of the most rewarding professions on earth; however, it can also wreak havoc on one's personal life. Heed the following problems that frequently plague principals and take the necessary precautions to avoid their striking home.

Too Much Work and Little of Anything Else

Shortchanging any of the dimensions of our humanness eventually takes its toll on our lives and our work. When one dimension of our lives becomes too dominant, it deprives other areas of needed attention and investments. Such disproportion

eventually leads to some form of atrophy in one way or another, and because the various facets of our lives are all connected, other parts will eventually suffer from the effects of the weakened link.

There is no such thing as separating one's personal and professional lives. To excel at work over time, a person must strategize to do what Steven Covey calls sharpening the saw, maintaining balance in one's life with regular, sufficient investments in all areas of our humanness to sustain and renew oneself.

Ignoring One's Own Mortality

Pay attention to your ever-changing needs. We are always changing. If we are healthy beings, the changes involve learning, adapting, and getting better at being our best. However, too often we form habits of behavior that are resistant to change, despite our need to make continuing adjustments and adaptations. No area seems more illustrative of our lifelong metamorphosis than our bodies. Diet and exercise are important at any age, but the specifics of how best to provide nutrition and exercise are continually changing. Most of us know what we are reluctant to heed: At age 45, we should not expect to be able to eat the way we did at 25 unless we increase our physical activity to compensate for the decline in metabolic rate. However, not only are most people less active, but also many people actually eat more than they did when they were younger. So the pounds pile on, the energy goes down, and the exercise is further diminished by the excess weight and lethargy—a surefire formula for obesity and a host of related physical problems.

Most principals are at the time in their lives when they need to pay closer attention to eating leaner foods, exercising more deliberately, and including a variety of physical activities in their leisure time. Because our individual needs vary, you need to bone up on the nutrition and diet literature and experiment to find out what works best for you to maintain healthy weight, strength, and good muscle tone. It is important to pay attention to your changing needs, invest time and effort to learn about what works for you and your body, and then do your best to eat right and exercise regularly to look and feel your best—and lead most ably.

Marginalizing Spiritual Needs

Most of us have our own preferred ways of being spiritually replenished. For some, the church and one's religious life help to meet that need. But there are many other forms of spiritual renewal. For many of us, communing with nature can be pure therapy for a troubled mind and cluttered brain. There is no greater source of spiritual regeneration for me than a stroll under crystal blue skies, the feel and smell of lush green grass, gentle breezes rustling the leaves of trees on a summer afternoon, or a walk under the stars on a clear, moonlit night. Taking time to enjoy a peaceful, quiet time outside is balm to a soul and can help us return more easily to our spiritual roots and core values that anchor us in difficult times.

Listening to music, nurturing a friendship, reading a good book, or indulging in a recreation or hobby are other ways of replenishing one's spiritual self. These enjoyable experiences are too often viewed as luxuries, rather than as the essential fuel for the soul that they are. The time we invest in our spirituality is well spent, makes us stronger people, and—of course—impacts the quality of our performance at work. Our need for spiritual investing should not be trivialized or neglected any more than our need for adequate food and exercise, and each of us must find those forms of spiritual regeneration that work best for us.

Confusing Positional Authority With Personal Power

The position of the principalship brings with it a degree of authority that has little to do with who you are or what you stand for. Such a position of leadership also brings with it the assurance that sometime, somehow, you are going to make someone unhappy, just by responsibly doing your job. On the flip side, your authority will assure you of a certain degree of prestige that can also have little to do with you as an individual. No one is indispensible—not even you or I. Resist taking yourself too seriously and forgetting that the esteem you have is, at least in part, related to the position, not to you.

Although you certainly want (and need) the approval of your constituencies overall, you will never make an outstanding

principal if you are overly concerned about being popular. Effective principals develop their personal power by day in and day out acting with integrity and doing their best to stay focused on the welfare of students. Do your best while you are in the position to make the most of the authority it grants you to develop your personal power through consistently acting with honesty, fairness, and purpose to make a positive difference in the lives of students. This steadfastness builds trust and respect, which is much preferred and more effective and lasting than popularity.

Neglecting Significant Others

A job and career are important, but being a principal should not be the top priority in your life. Principals (good ones) are some of the busiest people I know. The demands of the principalship can consume you, unless you make a commitment to yourself and your family to put your family first. Everyone needs love and nurturing. You need to nurture your loved ones and be nurtured in return. Most intelligent people know this, but many conscientious principals get so caught up in their work that they forget it is not what will sustain them over the long haul. Time must be made for family and friends for the relationships to thrive. Everything that gives to you in your life must in turn be given to. The no-free-lunch principle operates across the board.

Divorce and estrangement tear at the threads of all family members' fabric of well-being and usually lead to a multitude of peripheral problems. Sadly, a divorce often has a far more lasting impact than the marriage. It is impossible for most folks ever to rid themselves completely of the ravages of a divorce. The problems that generally ensue (e.g., emotional stress, confused children, financial losses) take their toll for the rest of family members' lives. Unfortunately, principals are particularly susceptible to marital problems and divorce, and statistics are particularly grim for female school administrators, who are even more likely to be divorced or single than their male counterparts.

Acquiring a Lone Ranger Mentality

Despite how much credit or blame you give yourself, other people to whom you are connected are vital players in your

successes and failures. Principals often try to carry the weight of the world on their shoulders. Regardless of how independent and solitary the phrase "the buck stops here" sounds, no man, woman, husband, wife, or principal is an island. Graciously accepting our inevitable human interdependency and deliberately nurturing a personal network of supportive others enhances our ability to involve people in our lives in wholesome ways that not only affirm our respect for them and acknowledge their importance to us but also improve the quality of our personal effectiveness. Lone-ranger thinking can lead to inflated notions of importance, wherein a person is inclined to take all the credit for successes, assume all the blame for failures, or both. Either perspective minimizes the importance of others' contributions and is badly flawed, grossly exaggerated, and ultimately self-destructive.

BECOMING AN ADMINISTRIVIATOR

It is hoped that you are among the majority of us who purport our motivation for choosing education to be our love of helping others, especially children, to succeed. Revisit that internal value often, lest you forget it under a pile of stuff to do on your desk, in your hard drive, or at the meeting downtown. Remember the joy that comes from mingling with students, getting acquainted with them as individuals, and building relationships with parents, teachers, and community that maximize support for students' success. These are the most important politics of the position, which should not be denied or neglected and without which many principals find themselves depleted of their original enthusiasm as an educator, a significant contributor to being an effective leader. Stay in touch with what energizes and excites you about your profession—and life in general.

Best of luck to each of you, school principals, as you make the most of your personal strengths, professional prowess, and the opportunities of your day in the sun (positions of leadership) to contribute your best to society through your work for our children.

IN CONCLUSION

Taken together, this text's compendium of skills, suggestions, and strategies becomes integrated, interrelated, powerful tools for leaders to transform schools into learning communities in which they can most effectively channel the work of the organization toward accomplishing education's primary mission: students' achievement and success. These should be the threads that bind a healthy, learning village—the village's mutual concerns for children's well-being—which, when woven together, create a strong alliance, a safety net, and a security blanket for students that will ultimately transform the at-risk populations into increasing numbers of students who are most likely to succeed—at school, at home, in the community, and beyond. What else is more important in this world?

References and Suggested Readings

**Tool Extenders: Recommended resources for further exploration of beliefs, values, and reflective leadership practices.*

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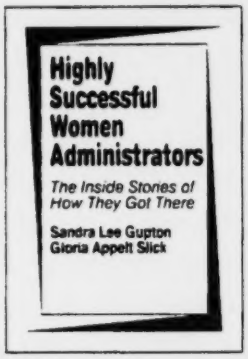
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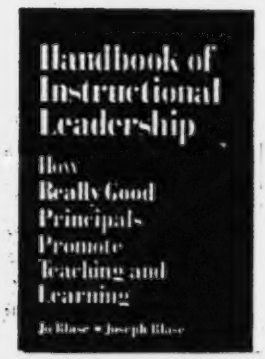

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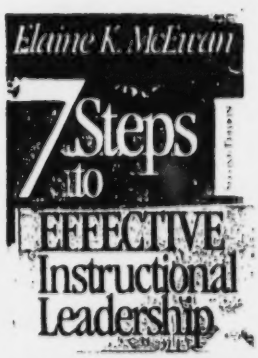

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